

Industrial Worker

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EDUCATION

ORGANIZATION

EMANCIPATION

Auto Strikes Show We Can Win

The United Auto Workers have settled a strike at Chrysler's Mound Road engine plant in Detroit. The month-long strike by 1,900 workers to protest Chrysler's plans to buy more parts from outside subcontractors had forced Chrysler to close five assembly plants and partly close two other plants and 14 parts factories, costing the company some \$1.5 billion in sales.

A series of strikes over outsourcing and overtime closed auto plants across the country in recent months. Some 5,900 workers struck General Motors' Pontiac plant April 22 and its Oklahoma City plant April 5. Workers are demanding that the company hire hundreds of new workers to reduce overtime and workloads. GM workers are being forced to work six- and seven-day weeks month after month because the company refuses to hire enough workers to do the work.

Injury rates, especially from repetitive strain injuries, have tripled because too few workers are being pressured to turn out too much work. The Oklahoma City plant lost 900 jobs last year, despite a national contract that purportedly protects employment levels. Workers are demanding 500 of the jobs back.

GM settled a two-week strike at its Fort Wayne, Ind., pickup truck plant March 27, agreeing to add 276 workers to the payroll. Fort Wayne workers had been putting in an average of an hour-and-a-half each day in overtime, plus occasional Saturdays.

Because the GM strikes are in assembly plants, they have not affected workers at other GM plants, who have continued work under a patchwork of national and local contracts which require workers to scab on each other. UAW officials have refused pleas by GM parts factory workers to be permitted to strike out of fear that such strikes might cripple the automaker.

The Chrysler settlement would permit the company to shift parts production to an outside contractor, apparently in exchange for a promise to maintain employment levels in the Mound Road plant.

However, despite these modest gains, the Chrysler strike demonstrates that the bosses remain vulnerable to industrial action, if it is applied at the production and distribution bottlenecks that have increased, not diminished, with global assembly lines

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Snyder's workers need fighting union

In March of 1997, workers at Snyder's of Hanover, a snack-food manufacturing plant in Hanover, Pennsylvania, started a drive to decertify their current union, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 72. The UFCW has represented the workers of Snyder's since the late 1960s. Unfortunately, while UFCW's bureaucrats raked in money hand over fist from these rank-and-file members, conditions have steadily worsened from the mid-'70s until now.

In spite of their contract, employees of Snyder's are often expected to work seven days a week in twelve hour shifts each day. The pace of work at their plant is unusually fast compared to other snack food manufacturers in the area. Workers' safety is in constant jeopardy because of the outrageously fast rate of production combined with the fatigue of people forced to work so many hours of overtime. Although these concerns are raised at union meetings time and time again, the workers' concerns were never addressed at contract negotiation time. Shop stewards complain that the union business agent would have closed-door sessions with the company's negotiator, returning with the "company's best offer" only to tell workers to "times are tough" and that they should accept it. On a few occasions, workers who

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Sears Settles With IWW

After months of foot dragging, Sears Roebuck and Co. finally settled with wrongfully fired IWW union organizer Michell Heim on April 25. Michell was fired for "spreading rumors and false information" just six days after she started an IWW organizing drive last August. The settlement gave Michell back pay, and Sears must post a notice to employees promising that workers will not be suspended or discharged in retaliation for discussing working conditions, or because of their support of or activities on behalf of the IWW or any other labor organization. Michell's record has been wiped clean of any wrongdoing. With this little victory under the belt of the organizing effort at Sears, a few workers have expressed interest in organizing to better their working conditions. We will keep a close watch on Sears to make sure that no more wrongful firings occur.



Wobblies protest Clinton's Volunteers Summit

Jim Straub, Alexis Buss & Chris "Spam" White operating Big IWW Lady, a 15-foot-tall puppet crafted by Philadelphia's Spiral Q Puppet Theater. Big Lady helped the One Big Union raise its voice alongside 2,000 other demonstrators exposing the April 27 Volunteers Summit in Philadelphia as nothing more than a cruel joke played on the working and poor people of America. President Clinton, George Bush, former Pentagon Chief Colin Powell, and the CEOs of America's wealthiest corporations urged the nation to volunteer as they painted over graffiti-covered walls in the northern sections of the city. But the residents of these communities have been the recipients of a brutal wave of government cutbacks, and now face the prospects of "volunteering" to work for sub-minimum wages as a result of workfare. As the rich volunteer to become richer, take some time and energy to oppose their war on the poor — organize and help build the IWW!

photo: Chuck Munson, Mid-Atlantic Infoshop

Detroit strike leads labor conference

More than 1,000 activists from 90 unions in the United States, South Korea, Brazil, France, Argentina and Cambodia gathered at Labor Notes' conference in Detroit on April 18-20. Themes discussed were union democracy, community-union cooperation and third world organizing, particularly Latino workers both in the United States and Mexico. Organizing areas that received a great deal of attention were health care and the Detroit newspaper strike.

The Detroit newspaper strike (now lock-out) showed Labor Notes at its best, or at least its most hopeful. There were three literature tables of rank and file strikers as one entered the conference. A march of 700 or 800 people was held to support the strike. Carol O'Neil, a striker received a trouble maker award and a true standing ovation. Kate DeSmit a striker gave the opening address and also received a loud standing ovation. There was hope that new working class heroes had emerged to lead us back into action and it was good those heroes were women.

What there was not was true analysis. The strike/lockout of over 2,000 workers is riddled with inconsistencies and conflict. Rank and file organizing has been in spite of union officials. There has been clear division between the unions. Union reform elements have stayed neutral. Community participation has been ghettoized. There is not a critique of the newspaper strike/lockout. We need to participate. We need to come to

Detroit June 20 and 21.

This is a critique of Labor Notes. Labor Notes is not always sure if it is cheer leading or analyzing. What analysis there is seems to be in a fairly narrow band defined by Union reform movements such as Teamsters for a Democratic Union or UAW New Directions. There is no mention of the rights or problems of gay workers. Women and African American issues are confined to a caucus. There is, for example, little discussion of how race and gender affect health care organizing, except for 1194 and the workers councils. For many unions community still seems to mean church or electoral politics. All this even at Labor Notes.

The privatization of health care was another major topic. There is increasing concentration of capital as for-profit corporations that buy up public and private hospi-

tals. Unions have been forced into social analysis and even some attempt at communication with one another. However there is still a flurry of divisive organizing efforts marked at times by turf wars. Organizing ranges from California partnerships with management in which unions end up protecting corporate interests against the workers, to multi-union efforts in Baltimore, to efforts toward community involvement in New York. The stories and the case histories were interesting. There even seems to be a need for individual unions to deal with the concentration of rapacious capital. But again neither Labor Notes or traditional unions seem capable of coming up with the impassioned debate that might lead to a new national strategy.

In all of this where is the I.W.W.? We

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Cooperatives & Unions

Borders Books' Terrorism

Overtime: Just Say No

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Get the Slack Out

There aren't many holidays in this country that are worth much. Look at Christmas, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Valentines Day, Mothers or Fathers Day. The first four have some use, since many people the day off work, even if their purposes are (1) to worship a violent, authoritarian deity, (2) to worship his son, (3), to celebrate war in general, or (4) to glorify a particular war. The last two don't even have the benefit of a day off work, we are just supposed to buy loads of crap, to invite capital to intervene in our family and intimate relationships.

Birthdays are great, celebrating a particular person in our life is fine. Halloween, is great - when else can you walk around all day in a mask causing havoc with no one thinking it odd.

But as holidays go, May First is the tops. Its history, both cultural and political, has the power to draw us together in the way a day of celebration ought to. Halloween does that as well, but lacks the deep connection to our lives that May Day carries.

We seek celebrations, strikes, demonstrations of our power as workers, and more fundamentally, as people who would control all aspects of their own lives. This desire led us to once again, to put another match in, to try to re-ignite the holiday that took us to the eight hour workday and that will one day bring about the destruction of the capitalist

Readers' Soapbox

workday altogether.

The Lucy Parsons Branch of the IWW in Austin Texas, with folks from EarthFirst!, Austin Greens, Accion Zapatista, El Comité en Solidaridad con Chiapas y Mexico, and others came together to march through downtown Austin on a tour of resistance.

The first target was the AFL-CIO Labor Temple (their name, not ours). We marched through their halls, shouting that real workers were in the streets. We let them know that unions are for the workers and that the bureaucrats are our enemies, whether in the company or the union. Two years ago, when we did this last, we got the same response from those in the building: the women behind the desks working smiled and waved. The suited bureaucrats scowled and urged us to get out. No surprises there.

Next was the State Capitol building. After getting shooed away by State Troopers from the "Prayer Day" rally, we held short talks on the opposite side on the correct place of government. That is to say, the dustbin of history.

Stop number three was the offices of the Department of Transportation. They are part

of an interstate plan to create NAFTA super-highway I-69, a needless, costly plan to further screw north, central and south American workers by facilitating transport of goods produced in the cheapest possible way.

As the final target, we hit the Mexican Consulate. The Mexican Government continues to attack both the Zapatistas and the non-government controlled unions. The traitor who controls the state unions, Fidel Velasquez, is an enemy of the working class, and should be put out of our misery.

The following day, there was an event held by Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1549. We drive and fix the busses that carry the students for the University of Texas at Austin. Our international has the dubious distinction of being the first in the U.S. to sign contracts that traded away the right to strike in return for arbitration. But several of us in the local are two-carders. At the April meeting on the urging of one wobbly, our local voted to have a picnic May 2 at 2 p.m. The local has periodic parties, but never had we held one during working hours. Due to the harsh discipline dealt out recently by the company (DAVE Transportation), the sug-

gestion was approved unanimously.

On May 2nd, the turn out was excellent. There was electricity in the air at the park I have never seen in this union, and I have been working here since 1988. I think people felt for the first time in a long time that we have power. Well over half of the busses were idled, and every time someone new arrived having just got off their mid-day shift with an update on busses downed, everyone cheered. Wish us luck as we Wobs continue what has been more than a five year effort to turn this ATU local into a real union, and on a broader scale, as we again make May First into the holiday we all deserve.

Joshua Freeze, x345498

The Anti-Labor NLRB

Recent personal experience with IWW organizing in Los Angeles shed a lot of light on our problems with the NLRB. U.S. labor law was designed specifically to diffuse the revolutionary anger of American labor during the 1930s. The Taft-Hartley Act was designed to further emasculate us. So we should not be surprised that the system is not labor friendly.

I recently attended a dinner for a Labor Law class I am taking along with another member of the Los Angeles GMB. The

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I.W.W. DIRECTORY

Job Branch= 5 or more members in workplace
GMB=General Membership Branch
IU=Industrial Union Del=Delegate
GOC= Organizing Committee.

IU 330: Building Construction Workers
IU 450: Print & Publishing House Workers
IU 460: Food Processing Workers
IU 510: Marine Transport Workers
IU 610: Health Service Workers
IU 620: Education Workers
IU 630: Entertainment Workers
IU 660: General Distribution Workers
IU 670: Public Service Workers

Industrial Worker

THE VOICE OF REVOLUTIONARY UNIONISM

Industrial Workers of the World
103 West Michigan Avenue
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197 USA
313/483-3548 iww@igc.apc.org

General Secretary-Treasurer:
Fred Chase

General Executive Board:
Monica Berini, Kevin Brandstatter,
Michael D'Amore, Liam Flynn, Penny
Pixler, Mike Reinsboro, Bob Tibbs Jr.

Articles should be submitted to:

Jon Bekken, editor
101 Western Avenue #15
Cambridge MA 02139 USA
jbekken@igc.apc.org

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AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH WALES

Sydney Regional IWW- PO Box 241, Surrey
Hills 2010

BRITISH ISLES

IWW Regional Organising Committee- 75
Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 4WB, tel no
0116-266-1835. For contacts throughout the
British Isles write or phone this office.

ENGLAND

Swindon Region GMB & Research Councils IU
620 group- del: Kevin Brandstatter, 9 Omdurman
Street, Swindon SN2 1HA, 01793-610707
General Distribution Workers IU660 and Boco-
memouth IWW- Ray Carr, Flat 2, 35 Parkwood
Rd., Boscombe, Dorset BH5 2BS

SCOTLAND

Stevenson College IU 620 Branch- Rm 3.05
Bankhead Avenue, Sighthill, Edinburgh

WALES

Aberystwyth IWW- PO Box 17, Aberystwyth,
Dyfed Workers Helpline 01970 624590

CANADA

MANITOBA

Winnipeg GMB- B. Mackay, PO Box 3204,
GNPO, R3C 4E7

ONTARIO

Ottawa GMB- 388 1/2 Kent, K2P 2A9. 613/
231-2922 <bh295@freenet.carleton.ca>
Toronto Group- Joe Chang, 137 Roncesvalles
Suite 208, M6R 2L2 416/539-0780. Meets 1st
Thurs 7 pm; phone for location.

GERMANY

Del.- Daniel Zimmermann, Atroper Strasse 22,
D-47226 Duisburg-Rheinhausen. 02065-56 446

WEST AFRICA

Sierra Leone- Del.: Bright Chikezi, 22 Wellington
Street, Freetown.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles GMB- Meets 2nd, 4th Sundays.
For location: 213/368-4604 or 735-8648. Andrew
Willett 1724 Westmoreland Blvd., LA 90006.
Mendocino- Bill Meyers, del. 707/884-1818.
San Diego Group- PO Box 907, 92112-0907.
Santa Cruz GMB- PO Box 534, 95061
IU450 New Earth Press Job Shop- 1921 Ashby
Berkeley 94703 510/549-0176
San Francisco Bay Area GMB- PO Box 40485,
S.F. 94140. Berkeley office and IU 670 Berkeley
Recycling Center Job Branch: 3124 Shattuck
Ave., 94705, 510/649-0414. IU 620 Berkeley
Worms: 504 Eshleman UC Berkeley 94703 510/
643-0440. IU 620 File 13 Recycling Job Shop:
504 Eshleman, 510/642-4895.
San Francisco office: Redstone Building, 2940
16th St. (at Capp), #216-2, San Francisco 94103
415/863-WOBS e-mail: staff@iww.org

COLORADO

IU450 P&L Printing Job Shop- 2298 Clay,
Denver 80211. 303/433-1852

GEORGIA

Atlanta Group- George Nikas, 11 Clarendon Pl.,
Avondale Estates 30002. gnikas@unix.cc.
emory.edu

HAWAII

O'ahu GMB- PO Box 11928, Honolulu 96828;
808/247-8584; wilcox@uhunix.uhcc.hawaii.edu
Honaunau Group- POB 868, Honaunau 96726.

ILLINOIS

Chicago GMB- 1340 W Irving Park Road #287
60613. 312/549-5045. Meets 2nd Friday 7 pm
(call for location).

MARYLAND

Baltimore GMB- Del. Rafi Bey, PO Box 8882,
21224-0882. 410/367-3024

MASSACHUSETTS

IU630 GOC- Jim Barclay, 75A Elm St.
Worcester 01609
Boston Area GMB & Education Workers IU
620- PO Box 391724, Cambridge 02139. del:
Steve Kellerman 617/469-5162 Meets 2nd
Sunday of each month at 7 p.m., Lucy Parsons
Center, Central Square, Cambridge.
Pioneer Valley Group- PO Box 154, Northamp-
ton 01061, e-mail: pviww@iww.org del: Mike
D'Amore 413/549-1143

MICHIGAN

Huron Valley GMB- 103 W. Michigan Ave.,
Ypsilanti 48197. 313/483-3548
Detroit IWW- Trumbull Theatre, 4208 Trumbull
48208. 313/832-4074
IU630 Workers Stories Workers Lives Job Shop-
Albert Parsons 313/769-0695
IU670 Ann Arbor Tenants Union Job Shop-
4001 Michigan Union, Ann Arbor 48109. 313/
763-6876.

MINNESOTA

Duluth GMB- 8 N. 2nd Ave E., #301, Duluth
55803 218/723-7887.
Minneapolis-St. Paul- 7315 Dupont Ave. S.,
Richfield 55423-3025. 612/869-4139.

MISSOURI

St. Louis GMB- c/o Bob Tibbs, Jr., 10072 Hedge
Dr., St. Louis 63137. 314/868-1472

MONTANA

Butte- Mark Ross, PO Box 233, 59703. 406/
782-4465

NEW JERSEY

Cape May County GMB & Building Construc-
tion Workers IU 330- c/o Richard Neill, POB
261, Cape May Court House 08210.

NEW YORK

Capital District Group- POB 74, Altamont 12009.
518/861-5627.
Rochester- Del: Ric Garren, 716/385-6681.
NYC GMB- Del: Wade Rawluk, 5610 Nether-
land Ave #4D, Bronx 10471. 718/796-3671.

Rochelle Semel, RD 1 Box 158-B, Hartwick
13348. 607/293-6489.

IU670 Socialist Party Natl Office Job Shop- 516
W. 25th St. #404, NYC 10001. 212/691-0776

NORTH CAROLINA

Asheville- BB&T Building Suite G130,
Asheville 28801 704/285-9521.

OREGON

Eugene GMB - c/o Rick George, 1840 W. 10th
Ave., 97402 email: rickg@efn.org
Portland GMB and Building Construction Work-
ers IU 330 Organizing Committee- POB 15005,
97293-5005. email: mmiller@orednet.org 503/
650-7187

PENNSYLVANIA

Lehigh Valley GMB- POB 4133 Bethlehem
18018 610/515-0181. Del: Trish D'Amore 434-
0128. <len.flank@node99.com> Lancaster: POB
796, Lancaster 17608.
Philadelphia GMB- 4722 Baltimore Ave. 19143.
phillyiww@iww.org Meets on the third Sunday
of every month at 4:00pm at A Space, 4722
Baltimore Ave. Del: Alexis Buss 215/724-1925

SOUTH CAROLINA

IU450 Harbinger Publications Job Shop- Merll
Truesdale, del., 18 Bluff Rd. Columbia 29201.
803/254-9398

TENNESSEE

Memphis- c/o Dennis Henke, 3461 Douglass,
Memphis 38111 901/458-9907.

TEXAS

Lucy Parsons Group- c/o Joshua Freeze, 1406 W
9th, 78703. 512/482-9402.
Houston Group- PO Box 981101, 77098.
Rio Grande- Del.: Erik Carlos Toren, 1018 S
12th Ave., Edinburgh 78539-5606 210/381-6786

UTAH

Salt Lake Branch- POB 520514, Salt Lake City
84152-0514. 801/296-7196 slcgm@iww.org

VERMONT

Burlington Branch- c/o Thomas Jordan or
Deborah Ormsbee, POB 1004, Williston 05495.
802/482-4601 or 863-0571 nfnena@igc.apc.org

WASHINGTON

IU460 Fairhaven Co-op Flour Mill Job Shop-
1115 Railroad Ave. Bellingham 98225.
Industrial Transportation Project- Arthur Miller,
POB 5464, Tacoma 98415-0464
Olympia- PO Box 2775, 98507. 360/753-5919.
Puget Sound GMB- P.O. Box 4814 Seattle 98104-
0814 206/935-9012

WISCONSIN

IU450 Lakeside Press Job Shop- 1334
Williamson, Madison 53703 608/255-1800.
Madison GMB- c/Lakeside Del: Jerry Chernow

WYOMING

Jackson- Teton Jack Langan, del., POB 4056,
89001. 307/733-4553

Portland GMB growing strong

The IWW in Portland, Oregon is growing quite quickly. We're almost at our first birthday and we have around 50 members. We are developing support in several industries including restaurant workers, building construction and musicians. We expect to have several job branches forming soon.

In March we hosted a West Coast conference of IWWs. The conference went quite well, with 40 members attending from LA to Seattle. The conference participants joined in a Jobs with Justice rally, "illegally" exercising the working class' free speech at a local shopping mall. Evidently the IWW's mass support in the rally has really raised some AFL eye-brows giving us street-cred in the local union militant crowd.

But we haven't limited ourselves to just political support work. We helped a group of workers who walked off their job in protest of not getting paid on time. We traveled to Seattle to walk the line with our Fellow Workers at the Lincoln Park Mini Mart strike. We leafleted the downtown Borders Books twice and currently we are in the midst of an organizing drive, but more on that in future issues of the *IW*...

Our other projects include; training members in running meetings and other organizational skills; a literature department which does booktables and distributes 200 copies of the *Industrial Worker* every issue. Local Wobs are also running a food buying club.

Portland GMB meets weekly. People interested in contacting us can call us at 503-650-7187 or write PO Box 15005, Portland, OR 97293.

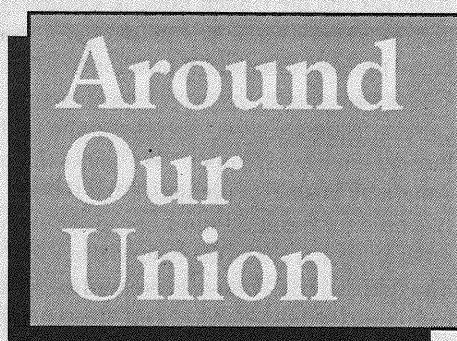
I would also like to appeal to other IWW groups and branches to appoint an *Industrial Worker* correspondent to regularly report your activities to the paper. The knowledge of other IWW actions makes the IWW all the more stronger as a whole.

C.A. Canny
Portland GMB

IU 450, Borders campaigns

Capital District IWW kept the pressure on Borders with demonstrations in late April and on May Day, and members have also begun efforts to charter IWW Printing and Publishing Workers Industrial Union 450.

Local efforts to educate the public about the Borders Boycott seem to have struck a nerve with Borders management, conspicuously silent until a late April Op-Ed piece by Albany Borders manager Gary Mele tried to refute IWW claims of union-busting. "Their attempt to gloss over Miriam Fried's illegal



firing by claims of employee benefits being better than 'industry standards' (which includes terribly low pay to begin with) is typical of Borders tactics to always defend their image over the reality of what really goes on inside their stores," Capital District IWW delegate Greg Giorgio said. "We see this as an admission of wrongdoing... Their need to defend themselves at this late date shows a weakness in the corporate armor."

Borders Boycott pickets have been lively and well attended of late, bolstered by members of numerous unions, Solidarity Committee of the Capital District/Jobs with Justice, and ever-present support from Albany's Emmaus House Catholic Worker community. IWW member Nick Patti has made a special effort to reach out to area poets who participate in Borders' monthly poetry readings by leafletting other venues where some of these same scribes also appear.

FW Patti, also active with the National Writers Union, has spurred an effort to charter anew IU 450 as a reaction to media conglomeration and ongoing problems like the Detroit newspaper strike. "Whether you are a printer, press worker, graphic artist or staff of freelance writer," a recent mailing urged potential members to answer the call to charter IU 450 IWW. Solidarity actions with locked-out *Detroit News* and *Free Press* workers have been initiated in conjunction with this call, including the *USA Today* boycott and boycotts of other Gannett-owned publications.

Please contact Capital District IWW (PO Box 74, Altamont NY 12009) for further information about any of these activities.

Atlanta May Day Picket

Here in Atlanta, we're beginning the process of organizing a local Branch. Our first meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 13. Several Wobs and others got together in front of the Mexican Consulate in Atlanta during the Thursday evening rush hour to leaflet the cars, asking people to write letters in opposition to the U.S. funded war against the people of Chiapas.

The folks with our signs didn't make it. So we stationed a person at the pedestrian

crosswalk, pushing the button to trip the light. When the cars would come to a stop, we'd run through the lanes, sharing our literature. In this way we were able to pass out nearly a ream of paper in about an hour or so along one of Atlanta's least pedestrian-friendly stretches.

Kudos to the Decatur High School students, one as young as the 7th grade, who joined us for this action. If I had started my street activism at such an early age, no telling what sort of trouble I could have stirred up by now.

— X345702

June 15 actions against Borders

Sunday June 15th marks the first anniversary of Borders Books' firings of fellow worker Miriam Fried from their Philadelphia store in an attempt to break the union. Wobblies will be picketing Borders outlets across the country to mark the occasion.

May Day Actions

The Philadelphia GMB sponsored a May Day Eve program featuring the video, "The Free Voice of Labor." Carlos Cortez read poetry at a May Day Celebration in Chicago. Madison Wobblies joined in two weeks of activities sponsored by local unions kicking off with an April 28 memorial service for workers who have died on the job. May 1 saw a noon demonstration for childcare workers, a speak-out on "welfare reform," and a march to a May Day forum on ongoing labor and community fight-backs. May 2 featured a Labor Sing-Along.

Boston

Wobblies joined the annual May Day rally sponsored by the Immigrant Workers Resource Center. Speakers condemned government attacks on immigrant workers, and noted that money flows free even as the politicians impose borders on workers. We marched down Center Street in Jamaica Plain to an evening celebration (one of several in the city - local Wobblies also participated in May Day programs sponsored by the Labor Party and Workmen's Circle).

Springfield, NY

An afterschool May Day parade began at the high school and marched downtown, along the main street. Members of the marching band played, while others held signs with labor-related quotes. In all, we totalled about 30-35 students, fighting the rain and strong winds, but getting the message out.

Our group was particularly concerned with the fact that May Day is in memory of those who died in Haymarket Square (or were hung afterwards), and how thankful we are for those who fought and died for the labor movement as a whole. We also attempted to point out how ironic it is that the US is one of the few countries that doesn't support May Day, or even pay it national recognition, even though the events it represents are part of American history as well. We feel that those in power should not be allowed to repress the history of the working class.

— Chris Maj

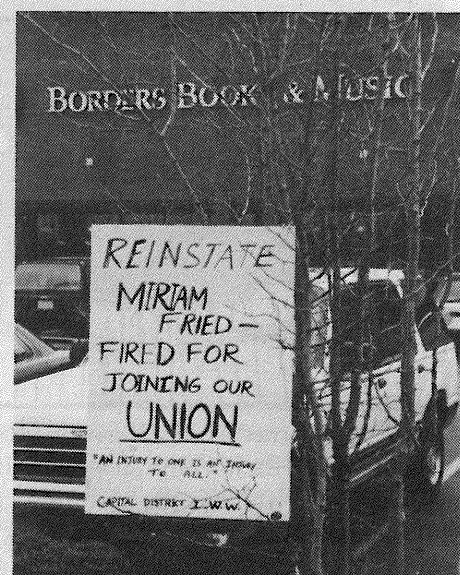
Rail workers

The AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department, Rail Labor Division, sponsored the AFL's first May Day action in memory, picketing rail stations (though not striking) and urging union members to wear stickers protesting attacks on railroad workers and retirees. The unions are fighting efforts to gut occupational disability pensions.

Moscow

Several anarchists and left radicals marching on May Day in the column of the independent union "Volya" were attacked by police on the orders of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia. They

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Borders continues terror vs. workers

UFCW Local 371 has filed Unfair Labor Practice charges against Borders, charging the book chain with intimidating workers in its Stamford, Connecticut, store. Despite majority support in the store, the union was defeated on a 27-10 NLRB vote. Borders workers om Bryn Mawr, Penn., Chicago, and Des Moines have voted for union representation, though Borders has yet to agree to a contract.

A lawyer with Borders' union-busting law firm, Jackson, Lewis, Schnitzler & Krupman, explained the firm's approach to unions at a recent union-busting seminar: "A 3-year-old isn't logical. A 3-year-old sees a pretty red stove top, and she wants to touch it, and you have to tell her how it will sizzle her fingers and be terribly painful. The use of fear is just as appropriate with your employees as it is with your 3-year-old." (quoted from *Labor Notes*)

While Borders treats its workers like 3-year-olds (and pays them wages almost low enough to qualify as allowances), Borders top executives gave themselves a quarter-million dollar pay raise last year. Borders CEO Robert DiRomualdo "earned" \$515,000 in salary last year, and another \$525,300 in bonuses, plus stock bonuses. George Mrkoncic got the same deal. Between them, the two hold 1.9 million shares of Borders stock, excluding long-term options, worth about \$40 million.

Other top executives saw their pay double last year. But starting pay for Borders workers remains the same meager \$5.50 to \$6.25 an hour. If Borders workers had a say in their pay and benefits, like Bob DiRomualdo does, maybe their pay would go up too.

Industrial Worker Sustaining Fund

Anne Icardi, San Francisco CA	\$20
Bruce Kayton, Brooklyn NY	10
David Leighton, Cleveland OH	10
Deb Russell, Springfield IL	5
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Jim Giddings, Greenville NH	10
Lawrence Wittner, Albany NY	10
Louis Haupt, Houston TX	100
Mary Hynes, Wendell MA	5
Norma Gaines, Granite City IL	5
Phyllis Sambos, Emerson NJ	5
Robert Roth, Kingston NY	40
Ron Yengich, Salt Lake City UT	15
Ruth Sheridan, Anchorage AK	10
Shawn Gillard, Salt Lake City UT	5
Shirley Lens, Oakland CA	5
Thomas Beckmann, Wolfsburg Germany	3
Will Thomas, Auburn NH	3
Willard Bolinger, Kansas City MO	15

Utah Phillips Solidarity Fund
Jim Giddings, Greenville NH \$10

Many thanks, fellow workers, for your generous support.

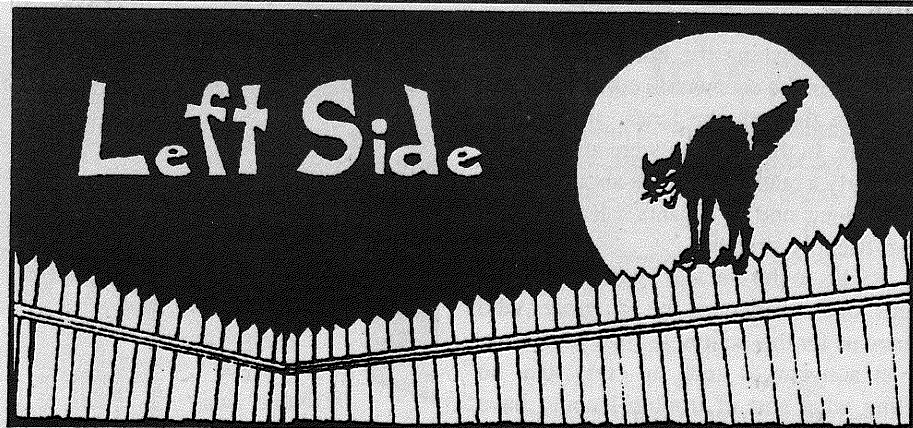
PREAMBLE TO THE IWW CONSTITUTION

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. **Between these two classes** a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interests of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system." **It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism.** The army of production must be organized, not only for everyday struggle with the capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.



One lad learned a bitter lesson in Freedomland's racial politics the other month, and nearly paid for it within an inch of his life. The neighborhood in Chicago known as Bridgeport, which is the nurturing ground of mayoral dynasties, is a predominantly white area surrounded by black neighborhoods and is increasingly being encroached on by an influx of Mexican and other Latino residents. It is by and large a working-class area, and the former location of the Chicago stockyards.

Many blacks come into Bridgeport, either to work or to shop, but it has long been understood that when the sun goes down and you are black it is healthy not to be found on the streets there. A 13-year-old lad riding his bicycle through this neighborhood was set upon by three burly white Bridgeporters, beaten brutally, and left for dead. He lingered for several days in the hospital before he began to show signs of consciousness. While the media kept an ongoing account of his condition, pious tears of indignation were being shed by political leaders all over Freedomland. Even the top executive from the sanctified comfort of his White House expressed his horror that such a thing could take place in the greatest of democracies.

All the great leaders of Freedomland were expressing their (check one) surprise, dismay, horror or disgust that racism can exist in their (check one) neighborhood, city, state or nation. Everyone was surprised and shocked except the black people who live near Bridgeport, or black people in general for that matter. For blacks, Bridgeport is a part of town where you stay away after sundown. In bygone years it was even worse. In broad daylight you dared not cross on foot. You either rode the bus or streetcar to cross through to some other part of town.

Your humble scribe is naturally a bit skeptical at the shock and dismay on the part of our illustrious leaders and their latest disapproval of this latest manifestation of "unAmericanism." Surely those great personages who are sophisticated enough to con the rest of us into consenting to their leadership can not be so naive as to be unaware of the dragon's teeth their predecessors have sown. Furthermore, the rest of us would be incredibly stupid if we were to believe a word of their hypocritical indignation or be inundated by a sudden deluge of crocodile tears.

Little Willie, from the safety of the not-so-White House said, "The acts of a few people must never become an excuse for blanket condemnation," and little Dickie Daley added his two cents: "We're talking about three individuals - three thugs. You cannot condemn a community." But what caused these three young men, who were only a few years older than the kid they beat up, to become thugs and how much did the community they grew up in influence their state of mind? Your scribe is sad at the fact that this took place in a working-class community perpetrated by working-class youth, but remembering Andrew Carnegie's boast, "I can hire one half of the working-class to shoot at the other half," I fear one must dig deeper into the roots of this phenomenon.

Outside of some loudmouth political hacks, the greater majority of our leaders and especially the captains of industry who call all the shots put on a very liberal front when it comes to matters of race. However, who benefits the most when one segment of our class is at hostility with another segment, and who benefits the least? Add two and two and you will see that disunity among workers is money in the bank for the bosses.

Good liberal people who live in Chicago or other northern areas of Freedomland smugly deride racial segregation in the South while being blissfully unaware that Chicago is the most racially segregated place in Freedomland. In most southern cities there is actually more integration than up north. Where northern cities will have all-white areas and all-black areas, most southern cities are quite racially mixed. The difference being that down south the whites have their houses on the street while the blacks have their domiciles in the alleys. True, the black dwellings may be quite substandard in comparison to the whites', but is it any different above the Mason-Dixon line?

There is also a fundamental difference between the southern white bigot and the northern white bigot. The northern bigot, because of minimal contact with blacks or other racial minorities, may actually believe that people of darker skin color are of lower intelligence and therefore inferior to them, but such is not the case with southern bigots. Due to generations of close contact with their duskier brethren, from slavery up to wage-slavery, they know better. Not only do they recognize that blacks are every bit as capable as they are, but also capable of being better. Unfortunately, they do not realize that the same class that gives the blacks the chazouk are sticking it into them as well.

Your scribe, who has been invited to give workshops to young people in poorer neighborhoods, always tells these youngsters that if one is really proud of one's background there is never the need to put anyone else down. Don't pay any attention to the liberal mouthings of those who manipulate us. Remember, if any real sign of unity rears its head among our class, their minions shall be doing their utmost to sow discord.

Those of us who have worked in the fields or under the hot sun are naturally going to be of a darker hue than those who lie in the shade living off the fat of our labor. They always tell us that their lighter skin is proof of their superiority, and unfortunately there have been too many of us who fell for that bill of goods.

It's time we remember what class we belong to, and organize and put those parasites out where the sun can darken their derrières.

— C.C. Redcloud

Piecards of the World, Unite

The Communications Workers of America and the United Food & Commercial Workers Union are in merger talks based upon their shared opposition to AFL-CIO president John Sweeney's reckless radicalism. Sweeney's the "socialist" who told businessmen last October: "We want to help American business compete in the world... It is time for business and labor to see each other as natural allies, not natural enemies." The IUE and IBEW have expressed interest in joining the talks to form One Really Big Business Union...

It's amazing that with such bold leadership U.S. unions still represent 12 percent of the workforce...

Inflation Fighters

Czech officials are celebrating good economic news - unemployment is rising, fast. Unemployment is approaching 5 percent as privatization of the economy picks up steam. Echoing bosses everywhere, government economists are thrilled at the news that hundreds of thousands of workers will be walking the streets fighting inflation by holding down wages.

Lest the efforts of these valiant inflation fighters fall short, the government is also pushing legislation that would require 60 days notice before workers could strike.

Glories of Capitalism

The United Nations reports that the wealth of the world's 358 billionaires is 45 percent of the annual wealth of the world's entire population.

There is power, power

in a piece of plastic ... One of the AFL's up-to-date innovations is the Union Privilege program, where they endorse (for a fee) credit cards, HMOs, insurance plans and other capitalist firms seeking our business, and sell our names and addresses so we can get more junk mail. The May *Labor Notes* features an interesting column on a UAW venture: "The Most Powerful Credit Card a Union Member Can Carry." The card carries a relatively low interest rate, but interest charges kick in the moment you charge something - even if you pay the card off every month. This "feature" could cost unwary unionists hundreds of dollars a year.

So the AFL's "union privilege" program gives us the "privilege" of being ripped off by the capitalists. Sort of like wage slavery, but without the wages...

Glories of Capitalism II

Ever wonder why some bosses make a measly \$100,000, and others get salaries in the \$6 million range? Well, it's simple, really. Capitalism is an efficient economic system in which people are rewarded for their efforts. A new study published by United for a Fair Economy and the Institute for Policy Studies shows that the chief executive officers of the 30 U.S. companies

which laid-off the most workers in 1996 were paid much more, on average, than other top executives. Indeed, the lay-off leaders got an average pay hike of 67.3 percent - far above the 54 percent raise (including stock options) averaged by executives at the U.S.'s largest 365 firms. The average worker got 3 percent last year.

AT&T chief Robert Allen led the downsizing pack, with 49,000 lay-offs. He was paid \$2.4 million in salary and bonus, and another \$3.5 in stock options. Full-time AT&T workers start at \$10,500.

RJR Nabisco chief

Steven Goldstore was paid nearly \$6.8 million, 353 times starting pay rate in his unionized factories. (Goldstore earned a 388 per-

cent pay hike; he axed "only" 4,200 workers last year.) The average teller at Bank America would have to work for 227 years to earn CEO David Coulter's \$3.5 million in salary and bonuses. Details at www.stw.org

Scabbing on the Unemployed

The U.S. Labor Department reports that unemployment is at its lowest rate since 1973, with "just" 11.5 million jobless and underemployed workers. Meanwhile, 14,000 factory workers lost their jobs in April, even though the survivors were forced to put in an average of 5 hours a week of overtime.

Any union better than none?

It's often said that even the worst union is better than no union at all. I used to believe that, but find it harder and harder to swallow. Can we honestly tell the hundreds of thousands of UFCW members working for minimum wage that they're better off for paying union dues? The SEIU's "Greedy Gus" Bevona pulls in \$496,262 a year (he holds down three jobs); many of the workers he "represents" get just \$6.80 an hour (not much to support a family in New York City). SEIU members are fighting to limit Bevona's pay to no more than four times the pay of the building cleaners he represents...

We report elsewhere this issue on the antics of the UFCW local "representing" Snyder workers; if they're still unhappy a year from now, he promises he'll trade them to some other business union. What he won't do is let them run "their" union...

Unfortunately, such thinking is all too common. Sitting on my desk is a sorry document from the United Paperworkers International "Union," wherein they pledge unconditional surrender to Briggs & Stratton. They had to "receiver" the local to put this through. UPIU drops its unfair labor practice charges, prohibits members from working to rule, agrees that any workers who refuse to work overtime can be fired, agrees that no worker will disparage the company, and surrenders grievance rights for workers accused of doing any of the above. Look for the gory details next month...

— Jon Bekken

Attention Women Wobs:

Charlie Sato Memorial Fund Award

Charlene "Charlie" Sato, an education worker and a founding member of the O'ahu GMB, died of cancer on January 28, 1996, aged 44. A memorial fund in her name was established with the Union designed to facilitate women Wobs' participation in General Assembly by helping with travel costs. The first award was made to Miriam Fried of the Philadelphia GMB for the 1996 Assembly in Salt Lake City. This year approximately \$200 is available for one or more women Wobs planning to attend GA in St. Louis.

Those wishing to apply should send a brief (1 or 2-page) description of their work with the union and any plans for participation at GA, and specifying the amount needed. There is no fixed format and a minimum of bureaucracy for the application. By July 1, send one legible copy (preferably typed) to Mike Long, c/o O'ahu GMB, PO Box 11928, Honolulu HI 96828. Copies will then be sent to three women Wobs (in different locations), who will judge the applications on their merits and make a decision. The member(s) they select for an award will be notified by August 1. (In future years, the whole process will likely be brought forward by one or two months. Sorry for the rush this time.) Please bring this opportunity to the attention of any women Wobs who might be interested.

Readers' Soapbox...

continued from page 2

speaker was a NLRB member whose message was "The System Works." A good joke. We *know* who it works for. Whining about neoliberal hanging judges seems kind of farcical. Even more farcical is depending on the NLRA process to unionize.

Statistics show a median time to NLRB election of 50 days, plenty of time for any capitalist scumbag to engage in union-busting, coercion, bargaining unit packing, etc. What can we do, file a grievance with the hanging judges? Get serious! Union-busting experts school bosses in the latest techniques – witness the evidence at the Wherehouse. This clearly demonstrates the need to stop playing at being craft unionists.

Union membership peaked the year the AFL and CIO merged. Little wonder that it declined when the CIO adopted the capitulationist party line of the AFL. We all know of AFL-CIO unions sold out. If not, read *The American Labor Movement: A New Beginning* by Sam Dolgoff.

As part of my class I got a briefing on the Justice for Janitors Campaign in southern California. It reads like straight-line syndicalism, with elements like: 1) Industrial Unionism – organizing all the businesses in the region in a single industry. 2) Creating a power base in the community. 3) Direct Action – using protests and other harassment to make it cheaper to settle with the union than to fight it. 4) Know Your Enemy – in this case going after the big capitalists who own and manage the buildings so they will pay the increased cost to contractors of paying janitorial workers a living wage with health benefits. The rationale of Industrial Unionism is to prevent the people with real power, the big capitalists, from simply moving their business to a non-union janitorial contractor. 5) Understanding the Workforce – this means not respecting the divisions the capitalists try to force us into. They organized both union and non-union labor. All their staff members had to be bilingual (English/Español) because the workforce was predominantly Latino.

The Justice for Janitors campaign has now created a rep by beating powerful foes so that now when they pick up the phone to notify a business they were a target for unionizing, they now want to work a deal. One avenue for labor organizing is voluntary capitulation by the capitalists. When they perceive power and greater cost to them for not settling, the "rational" utilitarian response is to work a deal. Industrial Unionism organizes our control over a resource essential to production – our labor.

The object lesson in this case is that syndicalism works. The problem for the IWW is that we don't have the resources to leverage the kind of power to make it work. Yet!

So what do we do? To me, continuing to pursue a NLRB strategy is, at the least, a waste of our time and resources. Furthermore, it is contrary to our claims of being a syndicalist union different from the business unions and collaborationist AFL-CIO unions that sold-out the labor movement and almost destroyed it. Only 11.4 percent of workers are unionized. FDR's labor laws were designed to impose a Bosnia-like peace on the class war. Or perhaps I should compare it to Nicaragua or El Salvador, where "peace" has been an open license for the capitalists and neoliberals to monopolize political and economic power.

I do not trust the kind words of the new AFL-CIO leaders. There are still a lot of old rats rattling around in their organization. But there are new labor activists who are looking for ways around our restrictive labor laws. This is what the IWW needs to start doing. Those of us like myself who are dual card holders should start thinking of

the IWW like the FAI in Spain and make it a foundation to reintroduce syndicalism into the labor movement. Those who are not unionized outside the IWW need to build their credibility by fighting for unorganized workers. We can start labor hotlines to help the non-unionized get legal representation and file complaints for back wages owed and health and safety violations by the bosses, sexual harassment, etc. By building credibility where we are recognized and known for what we are doing, we can eventually get a broader base of people interested in organizing IWW union locals.

Another important task is for those currently in the IWW to educate themselves. I think classes in labor law and labor organizing have real value as long as they are put in the context of real knowledge of labor history. We should read up on what the IWW did in the past – what worked and what didn't. I would recommend books on syndicalism in the UK and Italy from the Kate Sharpley Library, as well as Sam Dolgoff, Tom Brown, and material on the Spanish Civil War and CNT-FAI.

I also think that it is important to start and maintain IWW collectives. The secret to destroying the capitalist system lies in destroying its legitimacy. Building popular resistance to authoritarian institutions and building a counter-economy which can starve the capitalists of our hard-earned money can contribute to weakening the system. In Italy, worker-owned and operated factories were purchased by unions, retooled, and then used to outcompete their capitalist counterparts. We could start creating a syndicalist counter-economy.

It's time to organize.

Scott Rittenhouse

Editor's Note: *The advantage of relying on government agencies claiming to protect workers from harassment, unsafe conditions, unpaid wages, etc., over relying on agencies claiming to protect our rights to organize and act collectively quite escapes me. Both are hostile to workers' interests, and both are predicated on removing our struggles from the workplace where our greatest potential power lies. Surely it makes more sense to organize rank-and-file workers' organizations – unions – on the job to agitate for better conditions, mobilize around grievances, and build up a functioning union presence that relies not on government certification or approval, but on our own efforts and determination.*

Turning to the labor board or the courts, it seems to me, is a tactical question. If the boss runs an unsafe workplace and the union isn't strong enough to take direct action to resolve the problem, it might make sense to call in OSHA (particularly if this is integrated into a broader campaign to educate and mobilize one's fellow workers around the issue). If a member of the organizing committee is fired, by all means file a complaint with the NLRB; that needn't stop you from striking over the issue (if you have the support to do so), or picketing the bosses' operations (like we're doing at Borders). The point is to fight for better conditions using the most effective tools available to us, and in ways that build our power over the long term rather than begging the bosses or the politicians for favors.

I do not understand why FW Rittenhouse believes that Jobs With Justice organizes on an industrial (let alone a syndicalist) basis. It is quite clear that they have organized on a city-wide craft basis in deference to the fact that the bosses have organized the work this way, and that the union which pioneered this campaign is in no sense controlled by or accountable to its members. The campaign is in many ways an innovative response to the problem of subcontracting of janitorial work, and points to the

I remember a day in the '50s when my dad brought home a coloring book for me. It demonized the Teamsters for attempting to raid the Communication Workers at the telephone company where my dad worked and was active in the union. A few days ago I discovered that the author of this coloring book was deceased Wobbly Bob Tibbs Sr. from St. Louis. Apparently the Teamsters were up to their tricks there as well. And a few nights ago I watched a documentary about Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers which showed the Teamsters once again trying to feed off the organizing efforts of another union.

So for more than 40 years I've been convinced that raiding is an ugly practice. With 85+% of the work force unorganized, there is little justification for turf wars between unions, at least where there's no real difference between the unions.

The IWW now finds itself on the ballot in a decertification election against the United Food and Commercial Workers in Pennsylvania. Are we falling into the snake pit occupied by the gangster Teamsters of the '50s and '60s? I don't think so. The workers at the food processing plant in question came to us. We didn't seek them out. They do not feel they are getting adequate representation from the UFCW. The president of the amalgamated local situated some two hours from the plant admitted as much in a letter to the workers. He pleaded for another chance and promised to appoint a new business agent for the workers. If we lose the election, we've at least provided a tool for the workers to shake up the leadership of the UFCW; but even this response from the UFCW president shows he just doesn't get it. He'll "appoint." He didn't think to let the workers choose. Lack of decision-making power is a key issue for the workers. They're having contracts negotiated for them which will determine their working conditions for years to come, and are being allowed very little input. All the local president can offer is someone new to do the negotiating, chosen by him, not the workers.

About a month ago I got a call from the business agent of a Carpenters local in Illinois. They had questioned the union credentials of workers for a flooring company and had been told the workers were Wobblies. I wrote to the workers in question but never heard back. It appears that they had only joined at the instructions of their boss; and their IWW membership was being used to undercut the wages of members of the Carpenters union. We had not been asked to serve as the bargaining agent for the two Wobs. I told them and the business agent that if they wanted help in negotiating a contract with their boss, we would be glad to help, but we wouldn't negotiate a contract which undermined the prevailing wage in the industry.

I guess the business agent was impressed with my statement of solidarity. He passed the message along to his regional director who emailed me that he found the IWW's "no-raid" policy refreshing. I figured he was assuming a bit too much; so I emailed back that I had not agreed not to raid, only that we wouldn't let ourselves be used by the bosses to undercut another union. But I told him that as long as they served their members well, they had nothing to fear from us.

I got another call last week from a worker at a shop near General Headquarters which we had tried to organize several years ago. It went with the United Auto Workers. Now they find the business rep siding with the bosses, not in a union caucus but in open negotiations. They too wanted to know about decertification. This did seem like a situation in which a change of reps might ease the situation for the time being. It will be a couple of years before their current contract expires and they'd be able to decertify. So I told them who to call to see about getting the misguided business agent replaced.

It's too bad that workers have so little access to information about how to change unions when their present one has become intolerable. Of course the union in question doesn't want to provide that information. They might lose some dues payments. And most AFL-CIO unions have no-raid agreements with other unions – not-out of concern for the best interests of the workers, rather for the best interests of the union bosses. We have the information and we'll be glad to provide it.

Decertification is risky business. The workers might wind up with no union for a year: no say in wages, no grievance procedure, subject to being fired at the will of management. It shouldn't be done lightly. But if the difference between the present union and no union is hard to discern, then it's a risk worth taking. With a long range campaign making workers aware of the dangers of no union, the result can be a new union which promotes democratic worker participation. The IWW comes to mind.

In most cases in most unions the degree of dissidence is too low to pull off a change of unions. The IWW promotes dual unionism. We encourage members who belong to the IWW because they agree with its principles and to the business union where they work because it negotiates their terms of employment to be active in the business union and try to institute IWW principles of democratic unionism and direct action.

If unions are doing their job, which all too few are, I wouldn't advocate raiding them. But if they aren't doing right by their members, I don't think that a wrong choice made by the workers in the past should condemn them to misrepresentation for the rest of their work lives. If they want a fresh start, we'll be glad to help them out. If that's raiding, so be it.

See you on the picket line in Detroit June 20-21. Sounds like lots of Wobs are planning to come. Should be fun.

These are important issues and I welcome contributions to this discussion.

— Fred Chase
General Secretary-Treasurer

Asian sweatshop workers fight back

Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Indonesian sweatshop workers each took strong direct action in March and April, despite hindrance from the state and the AFL-CIO.

In Cambodia, groups of sweatshop workers successfully struck and demonstrated for a 48-hour work-week (down from 72), sick and maternity leave and performance incentives. The AFL-CIO's Asian American Free Labor Institute, meanwhile, sided with the Cambodian state to support a new labor law which allows bosses to get away with non-payment of wages without penalty, virtually no health and safety regu-

lations, and, if the boss qualifies as a "village chief," the use of unpaid child labor.

In Vietnam, workers struck at two sweatshops in Cu Chi for overtime pay and against arbitrary sackings. The state announced March 14 it would press criminal charges against a Nike boss for forcing 56 workers to run around their factory as punishment for not wearing the sports shoes they assembled. Twelve of the punished workers were hospitalized as a result of the punishment. Nike announced the incident would not harm their high stock values. And in early April, the Vietnamese state agreed to pay

the U.S. \$146 million in debt accrued from before the US waged war in Vietnam killing an estimated two million Vietnamese. In exchange, the U.S. promised to lobby for Vietnam's inclusion in multilateral financial institutions.

In Indonesia, over 10,000 workers rioted against Nike's abysmal pay in late April. The army and anti-riot police immediately attacked the workers and defended Nike's property. Two workers were hospitalized after being trampled on. Talks between workers, Nike and the state-controlled union had broken down over the workers' demand for a monthly pay raise from \$71 to

continued on page 7

Abolishing the Wage System Are Industrial Cooperatives One Answer?

As Wobblies, our goal is to abolish the wage system. How are we going to make this quantum leap? What tool will we use to make the transition? We have set ourselves a Herculean task, a task that when we think about it stretches our imaginations to the limit.

Today as a union we are damn good at organizing, educating, agitating – and even growing. As powerful as our goal is, and as effective as our traditional, time-honed tools are, we must admit that the forces we are up against dominate our society and our own ways of thinking/

The yoke of the AFL-CIO is around our necks. With less than 15 percent of working people organized under their wing, these over-paid piecards declare they are the chief spokesmen and representatives of all the working class. They run business unions. Their business is to negotiate contracts, to collect dues, to hold annual conventions in pricy resort hotels.

They give wads of money and loads of time to the Democratic/Republican political machine, the fronts for Big Business. The Democratic/Republican political machine champions privileges for Big Business, setting rules for collective bargaining, fencing us in with Taft-Hartley, deciding who sits on the do-nothing National Labor Relations Board, or pushing the hoax called Labor-Management Cooperation.

Having the AFL-CIO negotiate a contract for working people is like playing strip poker with a stacked, marked deck. We give up vacations, overtime, pensions, health insurance – even the right to run our own locals. The only chip we have is a job, and this is in the pot already, anted up before the game even starts.

We have a long, hard road to walk if this is the starting point on our quest to abolish the wage system.

But is there a Wob alive who disagrees with what Big Bill Haywood said: "The bosses' brains are under the workers' caps!"

We're smart enough to go into business ourselves, using every law now giving the advantage to the AFL-CIO, Democratic/Republican, Big Business machine. We are a union, the real union. And as owners we can abolish the wage system, one business at a time.

The industrial cooperative is the one tool in labor's kit which can put workers at the steering wheel riding down the highway toward our goal. Not walking.

And why shouldn't we go with the flow? The United States is the most capitalist nation in the world. Government is the executive board, managing laws to suppress and to oppress labor to the great benefit of capitalists.

By organizing industrial cooperatives we take advantage of their laws while, at the same time, we learn how to avoid the potholes. By creating industrial cooperatives we collectively own the means of production. In these businesses labor controls capi-

tal. We decide working conditions, hours and on the way we pay ourselves. The industrial cooperative is used for these ends around the world today.

For example, New Jersey has a statute (NJSA 34:17, Cooperative Societies of Workingmen) which construction workers in Cape May County are using as an escape route from the wage system.

Their first step has been to charter an industrial union, the IWW, of course, embracing all trades in the construction industry. Workers joining this labor pool agree among themselves on the working conditions, and on what jobs they'll bid.

Seventeen other states have similar laws. Every state allows what are called Limited Liability Corporations. These laws let us organize industrial cooperatives if we choose, and if we have the get-up-and-go. In many, many communities from Biddeford, Maine, to South Central Los Angeles, workers are going for worker ownership.

The Industrial Workers of the World is the only labor organization with a philosophy and matching rules to permit this type of organizing.

What is an industrial cooperative?

There are several types of cooperatives, but only one, the industrial cooperative, can put full control of the business in the hands of the workers. Some use direct democracy to make decisions or to elect managers. Many more use representative democracy to elect a board that in turn hires or fires managers. All use the basic rule: one worker, one vote.

In the industrial cooperative every worker makes a capital investment equal to the investment every other worker makes. Every worker is an owner, and after a varying period of mentored apprenticeship, only owners work. The first investment everyone makes is know-how and experience. The second is labor. The third is money. All these investments are at risk.

These are the basics, the fundamentals, which make industrial cooperatives different from any other cooperative – marketing, agricultural, purchasing, insurance, credit unions, or the like.

Obviously there are many other factors which must be considered: Is there a market for the labor pool? In other words, are jobs available? Will someone buy what is produced, or the service provided? Is the labor pool deep enough to get the job done right, on time, and without a hitch? Are there management skills in the labor pool? Is enough money pooled to keep the business going when (not if) times get tight?

Organizing and running an industrial cooperative demands more energy than we put out for the Business Machine. We have to use the brains under our caps to the fullest. The same for our job skills. We have to be willing to learn new skills. Further, while we want to organize work on our

terms, we must organize work efficiently. We must learn about the wise use of and expansion of *our* capital. Nor can we forget to agitate for a swift end to the dog-eat-dog capitalist society.

We have to associate with other industrial cooperatives in the same industry, and then link up with other associations of industrial cooperatives until there is One Big Industrial Cooperative.

Operating industrial cooperatives is not easy. They are not for everyone. But there are many advantages:

Organizing an industrial cooperative is easier than organizing a union for the purposes of negotiating a contract with the bosses. When you go for the latter you go up against every repressive labor law on the books. Workers are fearful of losing their jobs, even of being seen with an organizer. The capitalist press beats your brains out.

If you are successful in organizing the union, then you are committing yourself to a life-long struggle with the boss, the courts, or both, costly haggling over wages, hours, working conditions. Some of us will, and must, keep on keeping on with this job.

The industrial cooperative can eliminate these problems. You devote your energies to the collective security of every owner, and to the welfare of your community.

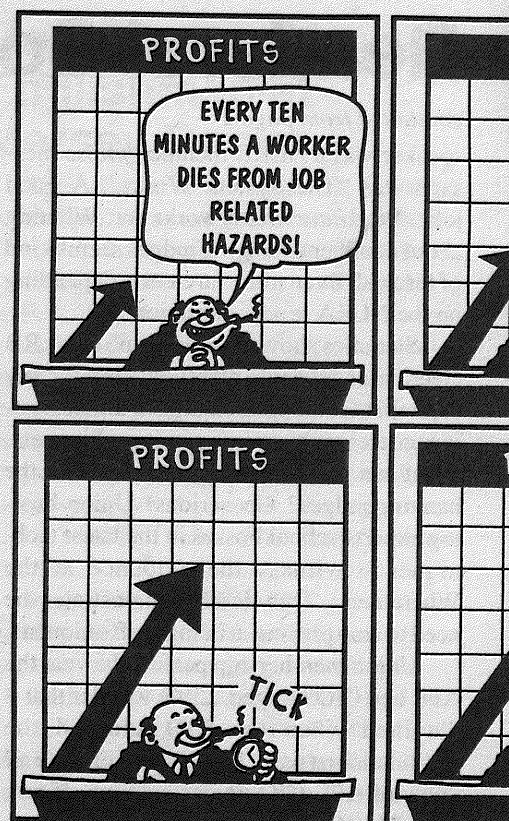
We believe, and many before us agree, that the Industrial Workers of the World and industrial cooperatives are two sides of the same coin. The IWW is its members. The union is wherever its members work. The same holds for the industrial cooperative. We workers own it, and if successful the industrial cooperative is an integral part of our lives and our communities. IWW members have political clout in the union, voting on every matter of consequence. Every owner has political clout, voting on business as we decide and on civic affairs if and as we choose. On the other hand, in conventional businesses, every employee leaves her or his civil rights at the front door of the plant or office.

The IWW gives members a platform to speak out on labor's central issues. The industrial cooperative gives us a rostrum to speak against capital's exploitation and domination of labor, an example of what we are talking about, not just an exhortation.

As importantly, industrial cooperatives draw into their ranks people willing to declare the Wobs' inspiring motto: An Injury to One is an Injury to All. How easily this world-famous saying translates into All for One, and One for All.

These two sayings embody ethical beliefs which are crucial to pooling the knowledge and the abilities of working women and men so that we, not capitalists, enjoy the fruit of our labor. We set the pay by the way we work together.

Richard D. Neill X332713
Cape May Courthouse, NJ
Frank T. Adams X342513
Asheville, NC



May Day Celebrations...

continued from page 3

had been distributing literature calling for self-management, and calling for direct action to claim unpaid back wages. Two fellow workers were hospitalized for concussions and other injuries. Three others were arrested, fined and released. At the station they met four Kurds who were also arrested for trying to celebrate May Day.

Stockholm

Over 1,000 members of the SAC rallied to celebrate May Day. They were joined by 225 anarchists under the banner "For Liberation and Revolution," who marched from an annual ceremony in memory of the Swedish volunteers of the Spanish Revolution.

South Korea

South Korean workers and students battled riot police in two cities when police attacked May Day rallies demanding the ouster of President Kim Young-Sam. Police lobbed scores of teargas grenades as protestors kicked and punched their way through police lines after a rally by some 7,000 workers in Seoul. In the southern city of Taegu, clashes between police and some 2,000 workers left dozens of protestors injured and about 100 arrested. The May Day rallies were sponsored by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

Istanbul

At least 26 people were injured when police attacked a May Day celebration at Okmeydani square. 20,000 demonstrators chanted anti-government slogans at a square in Sisli district in another May Day protest.

Belgrade

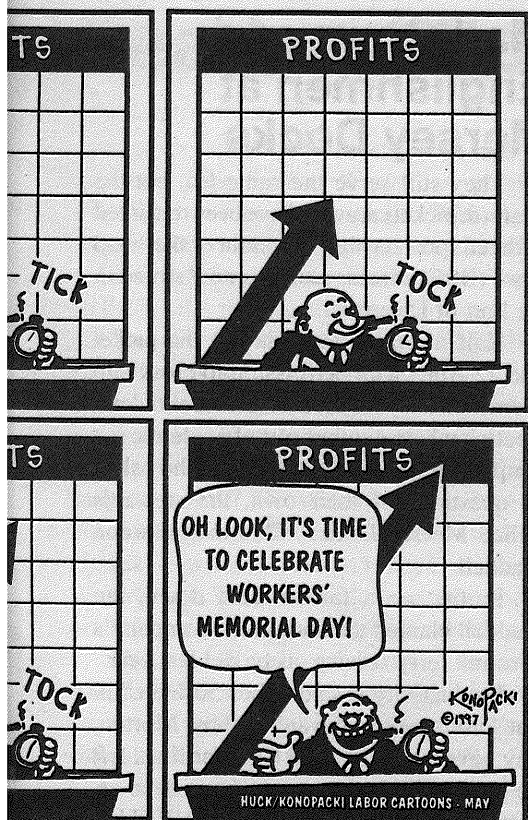
Several thousand members of the United "Independence" Guild Trade Union and the Independent Association of Pensioners and Students participated in 1 May demonstrations "against the authoritarianism of the authorities in Serbia." "Apart from those who were starting wars, stealing pensions and barging into universities, there are some other people living in Serbia, and they demand changes," Branislav Canak, president of the United "Independence" Guild Trade Union, said at a rally in Nikola Pasic Square.

We Can Win...

continued from page 1

and lean production.

But to take advantage of these bottlenecks requires a labor movement willing to fight for the interests of the working class, and a working class prepared to act in solidarity with our fellow workers so that we can all improve our conditions together, rather than being dragged down into poverty alone.



Labor Notes meet...

continued from page 1

had a literature table. We were signing people up. But we did not make an effort to provide our analysis except through the *Industrial Worker* and our literature. I believe at this time in history our ideas are powerful, but we must have the courage to enter the debate as equals.

The Labor Party was more than present. It was presented as the alternative. Though the Labor Party has many fine people, their platform and conduct are no different than the union reform movement. Changing people won't matter unless we change the system. Wobs know this. We have to remember what it means.

What is revolutionary are the workers councils. Organized for marginal workers they are a model for worker power. Low income workers may receive medical, legal resources or classes. They must promise to attend a seven week political education class. Then the workers become members of the council and eventually organizers. Domestic workers and undocumented immigrants have been organized in this way.

There is always inspiration from our fellow workers, and Labor Notes did bring us together. But again, neither Labor Notes nor traditional labor unions seem capable of coming up with the comprehensive debate that might lead to a new national strategy.

— Barbara Pliskow

Two Canadian workers per day

The Canadian Labour Congress observed a National Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job April 28 in Ottawa. The CLC has formally observed the Day of Mourning since 1984.

Meanwhile the figures of deaths and injuries on the job remain high: Two workers per day are killed on the job; One in 13 workers, on average, is injured every day; Nine per cent (5,400) of cancer deaths each year are directly related to the workplace; \$10 billion is the total annual cost of occupational injuries to the Canadian economy — the emotional costs to family and loved ones are incalculable.

Capitalism's Victims

More than 200 people rallied outside the Shell refinery in Martinez, California, April 27 to demand safer working conditions and an end to industrial accidents and chemical leaks in Contra Costa County.

On Workers Memorial Day, union members and environmentalists carried picket signs with the names of 600 Contra Costa County workers who have died in the past 25 years in job-related "accidents" or because of prolonged exposure to hazardous materials such as asbestos.

"This is about securing workplaces that are safe so our friends and family can return home safely from work," Jeff Dodge, a member of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union Local 1-5 told the crowd. "Voluntary efforts have not made our workplaces any safer, our air cleaner."

Terryl Lee, an unemployed carpenter who has worked at many of the refineries in Contra Costa County, blamed corporate America for making workplaces unsafe. "They look too much toward the bottom line," he said, holding a picket sign with the name of an oil worker killed at Shell in 1986. "On our safety and health issues, they just don't seem to care."

Sweatshop workers fight...

continued from page 6

\$82. The day before, 3,000 workers at another shoe production plant struck for higher pay. Many bosses claim they are unable to pay the 10 percent minimum wage increase passed into law in January, which brought the minimum wage to \$2.50 per day. In 1996, the number of state-recorded strikes in Indonesia increased 41.9 percent to 901. Ninety percent of Indonesians live in poverty according to Asia-Social Watch.

NLRB Chief Backs Binding Arbitration

Companies looking to force workers into binding arbitration to resolve worker-management disputes could get a green light soon from the National Labor Relations Board. NLRB Chair William Gould said he was inclined to support employers' efforts to force workers to sign pre-hiring arbitration agreements giving up their right to sue employers as a condition of being hired.

Many unions (but not the IWW) long ago signed away their right to take industrial action to defend their members rights, instead entrusting these to the tender mercies of arbitrators, most of whom have never worked a day in their lives. But employers began imposing such "agreements" on non-union workers only recently.

Invoking the long-abandoned legal principle that required those the state was about to hang to pay the costs of their execution, Gould suggested regulations that would require workers to pay at least part of the cost of the arbitration.

Canada: fish workers protest

Hundreds of unemployed fishery workers in Canada confronted the Prime Minister and his corporate press lackeys on an election campaign stop May 9.

Workers in Newfoundland blocked a line of buses carrying the Prime Minister and reporters who travel with him. The fishers chanted "Kick 'em out, they're no good" and "We want jobs" and demanded to be interviewed by the media. The Prime Minister's staff denied the reporters access to the workers but later in the day he blamed protesters for scaring the press.

Overtime: "Just Say No"

The following leaflet was distributed at the Labor Notes conference by a UAW member working in the Rouge plant:

Overtime wasn't originally intended to make working people rich. It was intended to penalize the companies working workers over the eight-hour day that the unions struggled so hard to attain, the struggle in which many workers died.

In becoming overtime brokers, unions contribute to the unemployment situation not as a solution, but as part of the problem.

Rather than educate workers and expose the carrot and stick nature of overtime and how we play into the hands of the corporations by becoming greedy and selfish overtime hounds, we deviate from the

Bulgaria: Parliament stormed

Workers in Bulgaria stormed the parliament in January when ministers refused to sign a statement declaring an economic catastrophe. In 1996, inflation reached 300 percent and wages could purchase only a third of basic human needs. Official banks were put under investigation after International Monetary Fund pressure. Unemployment among the active population reached 14 percent.

On April 27 the United Democratic Forces were voted in to replace the Socialists but continue to respect the IMF and European Union dictates.

March on Detroit June 20-22

The AFL-CIO has called a national mobilization in Detroit in support of the locked-out newspaper workers. While there is reason to question the sincerity of the union bureaucrats in calling the action (only after unconditionally offering to return to work), it is nonetheless an important effort to demonstrate labor solidarity and for rank-and-file workers to come together.

Several IWW branches will be sending contingents, and local Wobs are making crash space available for those needing somewhere to rest their heads. Our new Detroit Branch will sponsor a music program the evening of Friday, June 20. A prayer meeting is planned for earlier that day in front of the newspaper offices, and several workers are agitating for a half-day off to join in casting out the capitalist devils. The main event will be Saturday, though the AFL has not yet issued detailed plans.

Short Hours, The Revolutionary Demand

The following is excerpted from The General Strike by Ralph Chaplin:

The demand for shorter hours however is decidedly a revolutionary demand. On the basis of an eight hour day less than three hours are all that is necessary for the worker to earn his wage; the rest of the day he is employed in producing surplus value for the boss. Each hour of the shortened workday means for the employer one hour's less profits from every man employed — one hour less opportunity to exploit. This accounts for the fact that the worker's demands for shorter hours have always been contested more vigorously than demands for better conditions or even increased wages.

The reason is obvious: The difference between the six hour day and the eight hour day is the difference between the three hours and five hours given to the employer in which to sweat profits from the hides of his help, each hour of reduction being made at the expense of the exploiter. The difference between the six hour day and, say, the three hour day is the difference between three hours of profit-sweating and none at all. Therefore, if the employer wishes to continue to live off the labor of his wage slaves

he must (and does) guard jealously the length of the toiler's work day. Upon it depends not only the amount of his unearned income but also the continuation of his privilege to live without producing.

The chief demand of the General Strike would therefore logically be a demand for an average workday of not longer than three hours or whatever length of time is technologically necessary to carry on production on a non-profit basis. This is the most revolutionary

Goodbye to the 8 Hour Day?

California's state Industrial Welfare Commission has voted to eliminate rules requiring overtime pay after eight hours of work — a decision that could affect work schedules and pay for as many as 8 million workers. If union efforts to overturn the decision fail California now will follow less-restrictive federal rules that require overtime pay only after 40 hours of work in a week. Companies will find it easier and cheaper to experiment with new schedules involving longer days, such as workweeks made up of three 12-hour days. At least four workers were arrested during the meeting for disrupting the anti-labor proceedings.

lutionary of all demands because it dries up the possibility of class exploitation at its source. Under a planned industrial system and with the perfected machinery of modern production placed at the disposal of the human race even with the present staff of competent directors there is no reason at all (apart from the profit system) why anyone should be forced to work longer than two and a half or three hours per day. Any workday longer than that required to do the actual necessary work of the world simply serves to fatten the already hog-fat parasites of industry.

The General Strike for the three hour day would not only put the millions of unemployed back to work, but it would also put the Thieves of Big Business to work alongside of them. In this regard it is well to remember that I.W.W. loggers in the northwest won the eight hour day by the simple expedient of blowing the whistle at the end of eight hours and then walking off the job en masse.

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very foundations of industrial unionism, which sought to allow the working class to partake in decent jobs and leisure time that a just society would bring.

Overtime, working over, overworking, whatever the name we choose for it, is more than a trend — it is managerial policy and practice degenerating into a bad habit and proof that managers cannot manage their work load, the chief reason for their presence in the plant. And this bad habit of theirs dismantles the eight-hour-day structure the unions struggled so long to build.

The longer we have worked for our employers, the longer hours we may go on working for them. What a prospect, what a promise, what a future.

It is not reasonable to think the managers, with all their computers and high-tech aids, cannot divide 24 by three; but it is apparent they stubbornly refuse to.

We should help the managers overcome their reluctance to be reasonable by declining their invitations to work overtime, and by asserting our determination to re-establish the eight-hour shift and to reinforce it by sharing the "unmanageable" work load with our fellow unionists too long separated from us.

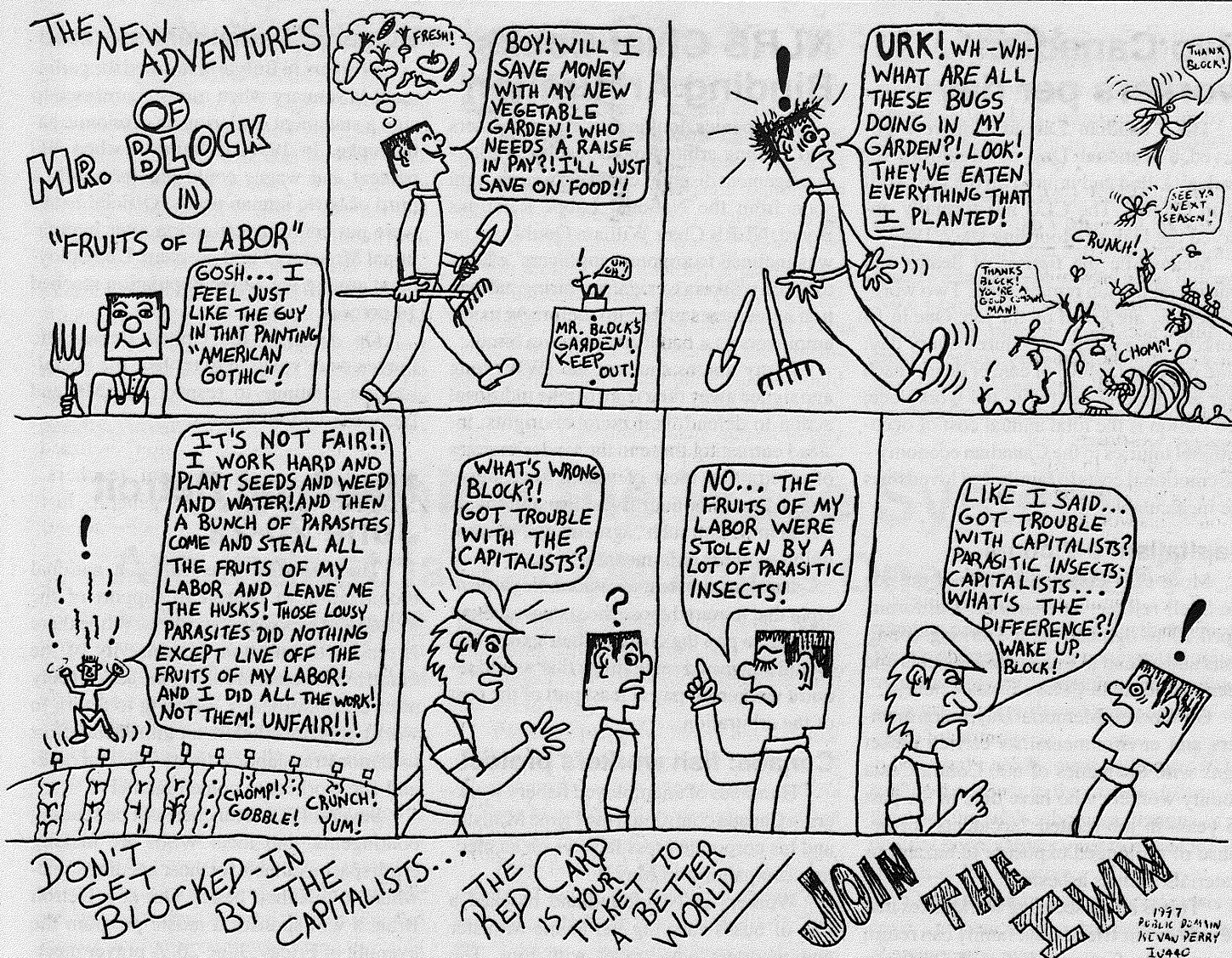
Onward to the six-hour day!

— Democratic Unionists Alliance

35-hour week in Geelong

140 members of the Australian Manufacturing Union at a stove-making and auto components factory, Blackwell IXL, have just negotiated a three-year contract which includes a 35-hour week consisting of a nine day fortnight, full long service leave after 10 years, a 6% wage rise, an increase in service and no trade-offs.

AMWU organiser Craig Johnston said, "The workers won because they have a history of being very militant ... The 35-hour week is a very important victory in a city like Geelong, which has lost a lot of jobs, and especially with the announcement that the BHP rod mill is closing down."



Mad Cows and Englishmen at Mersey Docks

They still serve the same tea, but the Seaforth picket caravans have been repainted with red spots on pink in honour of the "mad cow" (BSE) carcass residues now stored in the Port of Liverpool.

Half a dozen stewards left the picket line 22 April with permission to cross into enemy territory for the annual shareholders' meeting where another sort of epidemic ran rampant. In front of the media, who asked no questions of their own, the stewards grilled Mersey Docks' Chairman Gordon Waddell.

Profits are a further £2m down, but Waddell blamed the loss on the company's Eurolink ferry service, as he did last year.

Productivity is said to be "50% up." In that case, asked steward Bobby Morton, why have the ABC and CanMar lines left the port while no new ones have been attracted? Is this a marketing failure? Waddell claimed Mersey Docks had attracted new lines, but was unable to name them.

What about casual labour in the Port of Liverpool? Waddell denied MDHC employ casual labour. Invoices from a casual labour firm were waved about by steward Mike Carden. Waddell repeated his denial.

Massive EEC funding received by Mersey Docks had been secured to fund job creation. Where were the jobs? Waddell acknowledged they had not yet materialised, but were jobs the company "hope to create."

Workers solidarity too much for this multinational

Drivers who deliver VW-Audi cars in Britain have won their fight to retain jobs and conditions following an approach to IG Metall stewards in Germany and a strike in Sheerness.

Axial workers saw their jobs vanish when VW-Audi awarded the contract to East Cumbrian Motors. ECM is the only car delivery firm crossing the Liverpool dockers' picket lines, something the Axial drivers refused to do.

With 92% support for indefinite strike action, the Sheerness drivers went out for five days from 13 February just as the contract was due to be switched. ECM drivers refused to cross the Sheerness picket line.

Meanwhile, the Axial workers contacted rank-and-file activists in Hamburg. VW-Audi export through Emden, and have a Passat plant in the vicinity. A delegation met union officers from the plant, who promised to raise the matter at the national IG Metall VW stewards meeting and the national forum of their Works Council.

Whilst the transport of cars in Britain is under the control of VW-Audi UK, management in Germany quickly decided to oversee the negotiations already ongoing between the TGWU and ECM.

The deal means that ECM will set up a base in Kent, probably in Faversham, with a new company "Auto Link." Axial drivers will be taken on by Auto Link and retain all their former conditions. Future recruitment will take place through the TGWU, which has a national agreement with ECM.

As Sheerness driver Dave Williams told the dockers to strong applause on 25 April, "Workers solidarity proved too big for this multinational to handle."

As to the dockers' picket line, the Sheerness drivers will continue to respect it. What about their colleagues in ECM?

— LabourNet Report by Greg Dropkin

Australian IWW paper

Sydney Wobs have revived *Direct Action* (POB 241, Surry Hills NSW Australia 2010), and are soapboxing at the Domain the last Sunday of each month (weather permitting)...

China: unionist hit with 3 years in jail

Liu Huanwen, an independent Chinese unionist has been sentenced for "hooliganism" to three years in a camp for "re-education through labour." Liu's sentence, which is based on an administrative procedure which does not require a trial and does not allow for appeal, was passed on April 7 but not made public until May 2. Liu has already spent three and a half years in prison. Sentenced to one year in a camp after the army was sent in to put down the democratic movement in Tiananmen square, he was given a further sentence in July 1994 for religious activities.

Liu is a former official of the Workers' Autonomous Federations, abolished after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989. At least 67 independent unionists are held in Chinese prisons.

Tunisian unionists arrested

Four unionists with the Tunisian General Workers' Union were arrested for petitioning the state April 21 and held incommunicado for 12 to 15 days. The workers' petition was against increased state restrictions of civil liberties. Amnesty International believes they may have been tortured. For details, including addresses for protest letters, contact AI at sharrison@igc.apc.org, ua@amnesty.org.uk, or aito@web.apc.org.

Honduran union under attack

Management at the Kimi maquiladora plant located in Lima, Honduras, has violated the basic rights of its workers, who are trying to form a union. Kimi is a Korean-owned plant currently producing clothing for JC Penney, Macy's and Bloomingdales. The workers and union leaders are primarily young women.

Management has fired members of the union's organizing committee, locked workers out of the factory for two hours unless they joined a company union, and not permitted workers to enter the factory unless they signed blank pieces of paper which could be used for false resignation letters, false affiliation signatures for the company union, etc.

Workers notified Kimi's administrative manager of their intention to form a union April 21 by handing him a list of over 260

union affiliation names (out of 400 workers at the factory). Workers are demanding to be treated with respect: an end to yelling at workers, clean bathrooms, an end to mandatory work in the evenings so that workers can attend school and continue their education.

U.S. Labels/Buyers of clothing made at Kimi: JC Penney; Jennifer Moore and Innovation Sports sold by Federated Department Stores, which own Macy's, Bloomingdales and Mervyns.

Please fax the Kimi Manager in Honduras at 011 504 68-1504. It would be helpful to send a copy to any or all of the following: the Kimi parent company in Seoul (011 82 2232-6482); Kenneth Russo, Penney's Vice President for International Sourcing (972-431-9464); Allen Questrom, CEO, Federated Department Stores (513-579-7462).

Disney, McDonald's tied to 6¢/hour Vietnam sweatshop

Young women work 9 to 10 hours a day, seven days a week, earning as little as six cents an hour in the Keyhinge factory in Vietnam making giveaway promotional toys, many of which are Disney characters, for McDonald's Happy Meals. After working a 70 hour week, some of the teenage women take home a salary of only \$4.20!

Located in Da Nang City, Vietnam, the Keyhinge Toys Co. Factory employs approximately 1,000 people, 90 percent of whom are young women 17 to 20 years old. Overtime is mandatory: shifts of 9 to 10 hours a day, seven days a week. Wage rates average between six cents and eight cents an hour – well below subsistence levels. Overcome by fatigue and poor ventilation in late February, 200 women fell ill, 25 collapsed and three were hospitalized as a result of exposure to acetone.

Many workers at the Keyhinge factory making McDonald's/Disney toys earn just 60 cents after a 10 hour shift. The most basic meal in Vietnam – rice, vegetables and tofu – costs 70 cents. Wages do not even cover 20 per cent of the daily food and travel costs for a single worker, let alone her family.

Write or fax James R. Cantalupo, President McDonald's Corp, 1 McDonald's Plaza, Oakbrook IL 60521 Fax: (630) 623-7409; Micheal Eisner, CEO, Walt Disney Company, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank CA 91521 Fax: (818) 560-1930

Mexico: labor attorney beaten

Aurea Susana Codina Barrios, an attorney for the Revolutionary Workers Confederation (COR), was attacked and beaten by "official" union goons at the entrance to the Mexican Labor Board (JFCA) in Mexico City on April 2. Last year another group of thugs attacked Maria del Carmen Fernandez Alonso at the Mexican Labor Board.

Such hooliganism is virtually an institution in Mexican labor relations. The gangsters who do this work, both men and women, some of them former professional prizefighters, have over the years attacked union leaders, employers, attorneys, and rank and file workers. Some thugs such as Wallace de la Mancha became famous as musclemen or gunmen for the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) of other unions. The "official" union goons are part and parcel of the system which includes "protection contracts" and "ghost unions."

— Mexican Labor News & Analysis

Bolivia cracks down

The Bolivian workers' centre (COB), the country's main union organisation, reports that more than 20 trade unionists have been arrested and some of them have been tortured while in detention. The arrests followed a general strike called by the COB October 3 to protest the government's economic policy which the COB says "has generated more poverty and uncertainty for the Bolivian people." Among the arrested are a number of peasants and union activists who staged demonstrations against the government's planned agrarian reforms.

Chile: Miners take on public and private bosses

Miners in Chile united May 5 against private- and public-sector labor-repression but were violently attacked by police. In Santiago, police fought miners outside the ruling Christian Democratic party's headquarters. Police arrested 28 out of hundreds of workers, all of whom were sacked in April when their state-owned Lota mine closed for lack of profits.

Meanwhile, striking miners from the northern Quebrada Blanca demonstrated when Chile's president visited the mining town for a remote cabinet meeting. The 350 miners struck April 30 against their boss, Vancouver-based Cominco Ltd.

Snyder's workers need union

continued from page 1

expressed their dissatisfaction with the proposed contract were shouted at by UFCW representatives. The contract, in spite of negotiations starting six months before its expiration date, would be presented to the shop floor workers only at the very last minute, leaving no room for their input or participation.

When UFCW Local 72 learned that a decertification petition was being circulated, President Thomas Lazur sent out a letter to workers apologizing for not representing them properly, and promising to do better in the next contract negotiations. The current contract for Snyder's workers expires June 30. Decertification petitions must be filed in a window period starting 90 days and ending sixty days before the contract's expiration. Lazur's letter contained a sworn affidavit which promised workers that if Local 72 was given a second chance and failed, that he would personally hand over their representation to another AFL-CIO union.

Lazur wrote in the letter that he had replaced the former union representative for the plant, Mike Plaska, with a new representative, Carol Backes. Ms. Backes was unknown to the shop floor workers at Snyder's before Lazur's proclamation. Apparently democracy is such a foreign concept to the UFCW bureaucrats that they had no problem unilaterally replacing one representative with another, without election or even input from the rank and file. Plaska was not fired, but only transferred to represent some other poor souls elsewhere in the Local's domain. The dues of workers forced to work 70 hours a week in spite of a collective bargaining contract still pay the salaries of incompetent and lazy representatives.

Profit first, safety later

A major concern of many workers at Snyder's of Hanover is workplace safety. Managers are offered financial incentives for speeding up production, while the workers get no reward whatsoever. There is a very high rate of injuries on the job. The company hired "Nurse" Sandy Tyler to deal with problems on the job, but the shop floor workers knew that her real job was to keep them working at all costs.

At her former position at Roundhill Turkey Processing in New Oxford, Penn., Nurse Tyler received a pregnant woman complaining of pains in stomach. "You're just hungry," was the professional diagnosis, the woman was given some orange juice and sent her back to work. Her pregnancy spontaneously aborted on the job. At Snyder's, workers suggested that management simply replace Nurse Tyler with a sign which could read, "You're ok - go back to work." Chemical skin burns resulting from sodium hydroxide (nicknamed "caustic" by workers on the line) are routinely dismissed.

France: Trucking, Health, Banking and Airline strikes

Truckers in France blocked highways during their May 5 strike to pressure their bosses to implement an agreement on retirement decided after another strike last fall. The transportation workers demand retirement at 55 instead of 60 and state laws guaranteeing funding for the plan.

Health workers also took action recently, for increased social spending. Fifty thousand marched in Paris April 13 to support strikes at most of the teaching hospitals.

Banking and airline workers also struck in March and April, although in smaller numbers. Bank workers struck against the imposition of shift work and work on Saturdays. Workers at Air France protested a merger with another Air France division.

Unemployed workers occupied Versailles Palace outside Paris April 13 for a few hours. Earlier actions taken by unem-

Workers suggested that management replace Nurse Tyler with a sign which could read, "You're ok - go back to work."

"Caustic" is the browning agent used during the manufacture of pretzels, and with work speed-ups, accidents occur frequently. The greasy floors of the plant caused one Snyder's worker to slip, fall, and bust her knee. She went to the hospital to have it looked at, where doctors ordered her to stay off of her knee for a while. In order to keep her from collecting workers' compensation, Snyder's stationed this worker at a seated post on the production line. A few days after her return to work, her knee became swollen. After Nurse Tyler examined her, she reached the conclusion that it had nothing to do with the previous injury, and then suggested, "Don't you think you should be looking for another job?" Fabian Kuhn, a back-up shop steward brought this matter to the attention of then-UFCW representative Mike Plaska who promised to look into it, but never did. This piecemeal union has consistently softened the blows for the company, sacrificing the safety of its own members.

Fabian Kuhn, who had worked at Snyder's since 1974, joined the company's safety committee six months ago after seeing too many close calls for his fellow workers. Fabian himself had to take off nearly a year in the late '80s for a back injury resulting from driving a tow motor with no suspension on uneven surfaces.

Before and during his time on the Safety Committee, Fabian was an outspoken proponent of workplace safety, often calling attention to the fact that while Snyder's claims to care about safety and working conditions, it severely punished workers who did not meet ridiculous quotas with write-ups and verbal abuse. However, the quick pace of the production line and the inhumanly long shifts people are forced to endure is a recipe for disaster that was not able to be remedied in the Safety Committee, which included members of management who would try to intimidate the shop floor workers into not complaining. In late February, Fabian contacted OSHA in an attempt to remedy the horrible conditions at the plant.

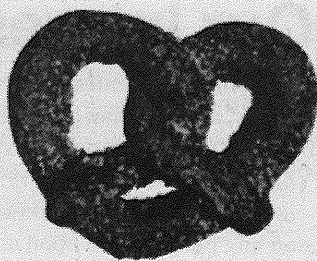
On Monday February 24th, Fabian was notified that he would be suspended for three days for "loading errors." This was obviously in retaliation for his efforts to bring about better conditions for himself and his co-workers. When he returned, on March 28th, Fabian filed a grievance and was called into a meeting with management. A union representative attended and sat idly by as management fished around for information concerning Fabian's loading

ployed workers includes a spontaneous redistribution of food at a wealthy Paris supermarket shortly before Christmas. The 50 workers reportedly appropriated champagne, caviar and other gourmet items - without being arrested afterwards. France's unemployment rate is 12.8 percent.

Chicago Fed backs bosses

The Chicago Federation of Labor has submitted a legal brief supporting two companies and six of their executives charged with racketeering bribery and mail fraud, cheating members of the Laborers and Teamsters unions of more than \$10 million. The CFL is claiming that criminal charges can't be brought against thieving bosses because the (oh so friendly to workers) National Labor Relations Board has jurisdiction.

— Union Democracy Review



procedures and the pace of his work. When the meeting was over, Fabian was told he was again being sent home pending investigation, as they had combed through his work orders and found three more errors on his picking sheet. These errors would normally have been overlooked in any other case. He was told to call in the following Monday to find out the results of the investigation, but only got the company's voice mail. On March 11th, Fabian Kuhn was officially fired, and the UFCW has yet to adequately pursue his grievance.

In its posted response to the OSHA charges, Snyder's singled out Fabian, saying that he was the only person failing to be safe. Fabian had worked his position for four years, and worked similar situations in the same company for 10 years. He was vindictively singled out for blowing the whistle on unsafe conditions. His former union abandoned him in order to not stir up trouble with management. On April 28th, Fabian Kuhn filed his own unfair labor practice charges with the NLRB as an IWW member.

Fabian contacted the IWW after learning about us through the internet. With the decertification campaign in full swing, many workers had become concerned that their only choices in the upcoming election would be no union or a corrupt union. Members of the IWW Philadelphia General Membership Branch met with Fabian in April to deliver authorization cards which were collected at a very impressive rate and submitted to the NLRB. The IWW is now a third choice on the ballot for an election which will take place on June 6. A week after the authorization cards were collected, an IWW informational meeting was held with about 25 Snyder's workers. The company had just begun captive meetings on forced overtime, where it has used every means at its disposal to try to convince workers that their conditions will improve if they choose to have no union representation. With a track record like the one above, many people who have worked at Snyder's are having a difficult time believing the company, but have also become extremely jaded towards unions because of their experience with the UFCW.

Our campaign at Snyder's is a result of an extremely unique circumstance - a decertification campaign initiated totally from the shop floor, with the IWW invited in to pinch-hit for worker's rights. Employees at Snyder's may finally understand the meaning of true democracy and elect to bargain from the shop floor as Wobblies. If the election turns out another way, the whole process has been a lesson in making the UFCW respect its rank and file members, and in showing the boss that workers can organize from the shop floor for the common good.

— Alexis Buss

Saying No to Neoliberalism

In Mexico, the Forum of Unionism before the Nation and the May First Inter-Union Coalition organized a demonstration in Mexico city of 250,000 workers. The gathering demanded higher wages, opposed neoliberalism, and rejected the "official" unions' corporate control.

The "official" unions' own rally of 12,000 members was taken over by the workers who jeered, booed, and ridiculed their leaders. For the first time in memory, a union president was absent from the "official" rally.

The larger demonstration included spray-painting in support of teachers, Zapatistas, and workers in general. Just before May Day, the Revolutionary Organization of Labor (ORT) was formed by various Marxist unionists "to become an authentic expression of the class struggle." The ORT pledges "to recover" existing unions from contracts without labor rights.

Minimum wages have lost over 75 percent of their purchasing power since 1976 and now over 30 percent of children and over 10 percent of the overall population is malnourished.

In Ecuador, thousands of workers marched in Quito against state corruption and privatization. Protesters chanted, "We're still screwed, we're still the same, always under the thumb of the World Bank."

Health care workers remain on strike for higher wages and industry funding. Military hospitals began scabbing April 27.

In Honduras, unions organized a march in Tegucigalpa of 20,000 workers. The unionists demanded sustainable development and an immigration treaty with the U.S. The day before, 400 doctors went on strike against lack of equipment and medicine at the Social Security Institute.

Elsewhere in Latin America: in Nicaragua protests against neoliberalism and 40 percent unemployment; in El Salvador, thousands against the Value-Added Tax and privatization and for new labor laws and debt relief; in Puerto Rico, thousands for state workers' right to strike; in Cuba, 1.3 million ("the biggest [parade] in history") against the U.S. embargo; in Panama, nearly a thousand against privatization, U.S. military occupation, 40 percent poverty, and 13 percent unemployment; in Chile, 3,000 for striking miners; in Bolivia, 10,000 against privatization; in Uruguay, 8,000 against unemployment and political prisoner disappearances; in Paraguay, for a soccer victory and, on May 2, a third of teachers struck for higher benefits and free food for students; in Columbia, 30,000 march against unemployment and for human rights; in Peru protests against neoliberalism and unemployment; in Brazil, against unemployment; and in Venezuela, thousands marched for wages instead of state vouchers, job security and higher wages.

In Turkey, tens of thousands marched in Istanbul against corruption. Workers chanted "Money for health, not for the gangs," and "Money for education, not for the gangs" while police violently turned them away from the city center.

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Exporting prisons: New frontier in 'free trade'

The governor of Arizona plans to build a jail in Mexico for Mexican citizens sentenced to state prison. The number of Mexicans imprisoned in Arizona has increased 4000 percent since 1980 to 2,373 (10 percent of the total). Private corporations who would manage the new jail look forward to lower wages for prison workers in Mexico.

Prisoners' rights advocate condemned the plan for removing prisoners further from relevant legal resources and ignoring the real problem of too many people being sentenced to jail.

Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin and the U.S. Virgin Islands are each either implementing or planning prison privatization. South Carolina and Pennsylvania each rejected privatization in the face of opposition from prison guards.

Meanwhile, prison authorities seized personal materials from an organizer of the Texas Prisoners Labor Union in May and the unionist asks for consistent contact and support. The union-behind-bars organizes for wages and equitable labor practices. Prison authorities repress the workers by confiscating documents, tampering with and "disappearing" mail, spreading misinformation, and placing organizers in solitary confinement.

Support letters to: Willie A. Milton, #561014, Rt. 3, Box 59, Rosharon TX 77583. Protest to: Warden David Stacks, Darrington Unit, same address.

To get involved, write the union's outside organizer: Dwight L. Rawlinson, 2121 South 4th, Waco TX 76706.

Our Interests Are the Same

Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life, edited by Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed. New York/London: Routledge, 1997

We Wobblies are known for understanding our class situation and organizing to change it in a uniquely radical way. A new book of essays about the social economics amongst gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people comes significantly close to many of our views.

Class struggle is much more than fighting "discrimination," *Homo Economics* argues when discussing issues like union organizing, socio-economic history, betrayal within the working-class, and urban gentrification. Many queer people engage in class struggle which, like Wobblies do, radically challenges capitalism by asserting our own ideas and practices of society and economics. One essay in the collection details the history of "homosexual" people within capitalism and implies that queer working people actively threaten capitalism by rejecting the arrangement of families around wage slavery.

Queer workers' struggles also benefit all workers, such as when benefits get extended to non-spouses. And in the course of struggling against discrimination, queer people remind all of our class that this is not radical enough because the support for "discrimination" in our society is really capital's assault on all working peoples' livelihoods in general. We need anti-discrimination laws, but only as a step toward free health care and pensions for all people.

Along with positive insights, however, *Homo Economics* also includes significant

stories of betrayal from upwardly mobile turn-coats. The Gay Liberation Front of the 1970s worked with radical organizations of the time, like independent working-class newspapers and the Black Panthers. Some queer scissor-bills betrayed this effort by trying to "assimilate" within capitalism. They welcomed corporate advertising in their publications and actively gentrifying the very communities where Black Panthers and Gay Liberationists shared local resistance. In Boston, ruling-class queer people who controlled a "community" health care organization betrayed workers by hiring scabs to construct their new building after promising local unions the job.

Since the 1980s, ruling-class queer people have convinced too many people that they are the vanguard of the entire gay community because of their wealth and relatively high-status within capitalism. This not only harms working-class queers, but every single worker because we start to think that any gay worker is naturally aligned with the ruling-class.

Homo Economics provides convincing evidence that queer working-class struggles are in fact radical and significant. In other words, we have a lot in common so all us workers better start learning our various histories so we can fight together against our class enemies and create a common future of freedom.

— Chris Vance

Northwest IWW Conference

The second quarterly West Coast IWW conference will meet in Eugene, Oregon, June 13-15.

Palestinian Teachers Wildcat

Palestinian teachers suspended April 27th a wildcat strike that had closed schools across the West Bank since February. The decision to return to work came one day after the Palestinian Authority released 30 activists who were arrested in an attempt to break the strike. Most detainees were members of the Higher Coordinating Committee of the Teachers in the Homeland Schools (HCCT), a rank-and-file body founded when the Authority-backed General Federation of Teachers proved more interested in defending its official status and privileges than in fighting for better conditions.

The release of the HCCT unionists followed an unsuccessful campaign to break the unity of the teachers and to isolate the HCCT. Officials announced that the strike was over. Police surrounded several schools in an effort to intimidate teachers. But this proved useless given the teachers' resolve to go on with their fight. An April 24 rally of thousands of teachers and supporters in Ramallah in front of the Legislative Council proved the Authority's isolation. Bir Zeit University students Council, high school students, and others stood up to the Authority's repression, and the Legislative Council (controlled by Arafat supporters)

issued a statement opposing the use of undemocratic steps against the teachers.

Arafat's regime prohibits strikes by public sector workers, and maintained from the beginning of the dispute that it would not negotiate with the teachers. However, the teachers' determination and unity has forced the regime to at least open talks.

The HCCT has suspended the strike pending talks, but continues to demand a substantial pay hike, protections against cronyism and patronage, union recognition, and an end to military and police measures against union activity. Cronyism is rampant in the Palestinian Authority and a deputy director's driver can make four or five times a teacher's wage.

High school teacher and strike organizer Khamis Sabbah says the strike was a victory. "From the financial point of view we had no achievement, but we have achieved a miracle which is better than money," Sabbah said. "We gave dignity back to the teachers on the street. We are not afraid."

The strike began over money and the Palestinian Authority's high-handed treatment. "We see our old classmates from school with a car and a mobile telephone, and they are working for the Authority, and we have barely enough for bread," said Adnan Mahmoud, an English teacher at Beitunia Secondary School who earns \$372 a month.

When the tame official union did nothing visible, teachers formed a "coordination committee" and began to call job actions on their own — first an hour a day, then a day a week, then more. The teacher walkout quickly grew, spreading to a majority of the West Bank's 12,000 teachers and 1,698 public schools.

Education Minister Yasser Amru began to speak of "hidden forces" behind the strike, and fired its 19 most visible leaders, including Sabbah. Teachers responded by spread-

ing the strike. On April 19, Arafat summoned strike leaders to his office. He announced that the strike was over.

Two days after the meeting, with the walkout still growing, four men in an unmarked car came for strike organizer Lutfi Abdel Latif at his Ramallah home. They drove him to General Intelligence headquarters for interrogation, and then bound him over for indefinite custody. "They were saying, 'The situation you have created is evidence you are working for the opposition,'" the high school teacher said.

Variations of that scene were repeated in homes across the West Bank. By nightfall on April 21, all leaders of the wildcat committee were in jail.

With the strike continuing, and students and teachers occupying schools to protest the repression, Arafat's West Bank strongman, Jibril Rajoub, called a meeting of teachers from all West Bank districts. He told them the strike committee was an illegal body, its members a bunch of old shoes — a serious insult in Arabic, connoting uncleanness and disposability. But the teachers said they could decide nothing without their imprisoned leaders.

Palestinian unions have long been undemocratic fiefdoms subordinated to political parties. But workers are tired of being ground down and bossed around, and of being told to put their needs on hold while their "leaders" take care of "more important" matters.

While the Authority has promised to consider the teachers' grievances, it has also made its intent to control workers by ruthless repression clear. The teachers have made equally clear their determination to control their own union and their own fate. If the unrest remains confined to the teachers their prospects seem grim. But if other workers take heart from this resistance, there is no way the regime can stand against a determined working class.

Irish labor leaders in America

L.A. O'Donnell, *Irish Voice and Organized Labor in America: A Biographical Study*, Greenwood Press (1-800-225-5800), 1997, 256 pp., \$59.95.

Irish immigrants flocked to the United States from the 1820s onward, escaping poverty and oppression at home only to meet with exploitation and discrimination in their new home. Like other immigrant groups, they built their own institutions (churches, fraternal societies, cultural orga-

Book Reviews

nizations), but also participated in and helped build trans-ethnic unions as they struggled to secure for themselves a degree of dignity and comfort. O'Donnell offers biographical sketches of a dozen Irish labor leaders to support his thesis that Irish workers bridged the gap between native and immigrant workers, mediating between diverse nationality groups to build a collective force capable of advancing the interests of all.

He organizes his immigrants into six chapters: Pathfinders (Peter J. McGuire, Carpenters, and Terrence Powderly of the Knights of Labor); Fenian Rebels (labor editor Joseph McDonnell and Frank Roney of the Molders); P.H. McCarthy, Lord of the San Francisco building trades; Radicals (Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, William Z. Foster and Mother Jones); John Fitzpatrick of the Chicago Federation of Labor; and John Brophy, Philip Murray and Mike Quill of the CIO. Despite the widespread perception that Irish workers were conservative, many of the figures whose lives are chronicled here were active in socialist or labor parties.

Largely grounded in autobiographies and memoirs, the book is very much rooted in the "great men" school of history, and often could benefit from a more critical eye. Rank-and-file Irish workers largely invis-

U Cal. TAs strike

Graduate employees at six University of California campuses from San Diego to Berkeley held rolling strikes in April and May to protest administration refusal to recognize and negotiate with their union. Instead administrators are appealing a Public Employees Relations Board ruling giving all graduate employees except research assistants the right to union representation.

The strike hit the UC San Diego campus May 7 through 9, and was nearly 100 percent solid. However, most faculty and other university workers crossed the picketlines to report to work as usual. At the UC Berkeley campus, members of the IWW's Education Workers Industrial Union 620 (representing workers in the university's recycling operation) honored picket lines. EWIU 620 was one of five campus unions signing a May Day statement in solidarity with the strikers and calling upon the administration to abandon its union-busting against Teaching Assistants, Tutors and Readers and technical employees, and its efforts to privatize university hospitals and other operations.

TAs at the University of Illinois also voted for union representation. However, administrators are challenging their right to union representation and refusing to open negotiations. TAs affiliated to the American Federation of Teachers after years of trying to build an independent organization.

New EWIU Bulletin Planned

A new issue of the IWW's *Education Workers Organizing Bulletin* is planned for early summer. IWW education workers are invited to send in articles on local organizing activities and strategies. Also planned is a section on radical teaching. EWIU 620, PO Box 391724, Cambridge MA 02139.

Canada: Teachers grieve homophobic censorship

The Surrey Teachers' Association in British Columbia filed three grievances in early May against their boss' arbitrary censorship of all books which positively portray gay people.

The union claims the censorship creates a discriminatory and intimidating workplace. At least three teachers have been threatened and intimidated since the censorship began, one of whom is considering taking sick leave. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation resolved to officially oppose discrimination based on sexual orientation at their convention in March.

ible in this tale, "strong leadership" is celebrated, and minor considerations such as union democracy (let alone broader social transformation and democratization) are brushed aside. While the book offers an often useful summary of the lives of these labor leaders and the contexts in which they operated, it suffers from poor editing and a tendency to accept their version of events uncritically. O'Donnell jumps back and forth between different figures, offering a narrative that is neither thematic nor chronological nor strictly biographical, but rather an uncomfortable amalgamation of the three.

Examples of the author's indifference to the rank and file abound. O'Donnell praises Murray for his autocratic control of the steelworkers union, maintaining "internal discipline" against "local activists who might be prone to ultimatums to employers and unwise strikes." These activists needed "lengthy seasoning and mentoring" and "careful direction" to protect workers from themselves (180). In another chapter O'Donnell's text says that while P.H. McCarthy ruled San Francisco's building trades workers with an iron hand, his reign was free of corruption and benefited workers and contractors alike. Leaving aside the question of whether it is possible to simultaneously advance the interests of workers and bosses, O'Donnell's footnotes admit that McCarthy was a crook – receiving a pay-off of \$10,000 in one instance.

And O'Donnell's reliance on his subjects' own accounts of their lives often short-changes readers. Mother Jones' surviving correspondence with socialist and labor leaders, for example, makes it clear that she was much more involved in the internal political and factional life of these organizations than this book suggests. Nor is it accurate to suggest that Fitzpatrick retained his commitment to industrial organization and social reform in his final years. When the CIO-affiliated Newspaper Guild struck the Hearst papers in Chicago, for example, Fitzpatrick actively worked to break the strike, praising the publisher he had earlier denounced as one of labor's most vicious enemies.

Most of the figures O'Donnell discusses have received more in-depth treatment from other historians, and the interpretive framework imposed here add little if anything to our understanding. The book's main contribution is its broad sweep, covering several influential labor leaders whose work spanned several decades and industries. [JB]

Bumperstickers

Six bumperstickers, each with IWW Globe on left. Slogans: Solidarity Forever, One Big Union, Because Capitalism Cannot Be Reformed, An Injury to One Is an Injury to All!, Don't Mourn Organize, Labor is Entitled to All It Creates. Black on durable white stock, \$1.25 each, post-paid.

Silent Agitators

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Collective Bargaining Manual

\$2.50. New York GMB, RD 1 Box 158-B, Hartwick NY 13348

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Great News: Your Wages Aren't Going Up

April ended with some very good news: Wages are stagnant.

If you work for a living, that may sound a bit odd. But for the news media, it makes perfect sense to claim that what's bad for workers is good for the economy.

The front page of *The New York Times* trumpeted the latest economic news with a cheery headline – "Markets Surge as Labor Costs Stay in Check."

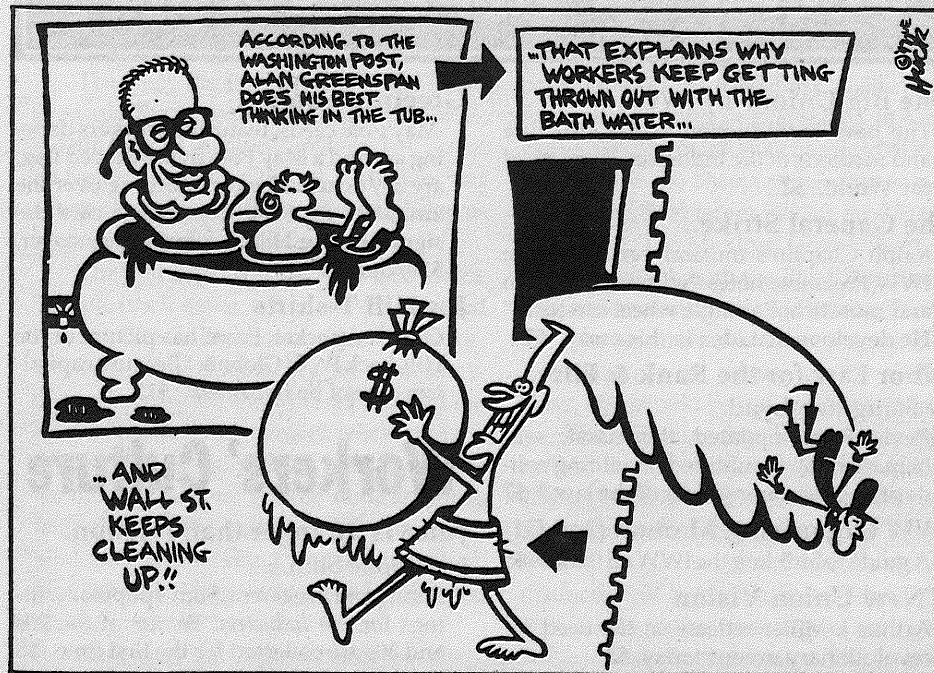
"The stock market rocketed yesterday to its greatest gain in more than five years," the *Times* reported. Why? Because important people were happy that wages had barely increased in the United States. And employers hadn't shelled out more for "benefits like health insurance and pensions."

The *Times* front page spotlighted the jubilant comment of a senior economist at the huge brokerage firm of Goldman, Sachs and Co.: "There is no question this is a better labor cost report than we had anticipated."

"Better" for employers. But how about workers? Well, they're not worth much ink. And they're certainly not worth hearing. The 18-paragraph *Times* article quoted a few current and former government economists – without a word from workers, their representatives or labor advocates.

When more money is in our pay envelopes, most news reports tell us that's bad. It's "inflationary," and it means that the economy is "overheating." But when stocks and bonds soar in value, that's supposed to make us all feel good about economic progress.

News outlets often seem dazzled by Wall Street. That fascination is especially intense on public television, where programs like the "Nightly Business Report"



and Louis Rukeyser's "Wall Street Week" keep close tabs on stock-market trends.

Catering to an upscale audience, public TV depends on millions of dollars from major companies pleased to "underwrite" programming that promotes their outlooks. It shouldn't surprise us that the "NewsHour With Jim Lehrer" – funded by an agribusiness giant and an insurance company – devotes long and fervent segments to the stock market.

The media emphasis has gotten so out of whack that we're encouraged to care more about the fortunes of Wall Street than the incomes on our own street.

But only 2 percent of the public owns half of the country's individual stock and bond holdings. Other people in the market are very small investors. And 80 percent of

Americans have no direct stake in the stock markets at all. (Employees with indirect holdings via pension funds have no say in how the money is invested and can't get access to proceeds until they retire.)

Although most news accounts leave the vague impression that an upswing in the stock market augurs well for the nation's work force, the opposite has been the case.

For nearly a quarter of a century, despite advances in education, the picture for America's workers has been bleak. During that time, real wages for males have dropped 15 percent. And while women have entered a wider range of jobs, their real wages have increased by only 4 percent.

Meanwhile, investor gains and corporate profits went through the roof. Government macro-economic policies have served

Wall Street's interests – while flattening workers' income.

Just as evidence of wage stagnation makes stocks rise, Wall Streeters are frequently ecstatic to learn that a major corporation has decided to slash its payroll. "Downsizing" usually sends stock prices climbing.

Clearly, big-money investors and average workers have very different interests. But anyone who points that out is liable to face media attack for encouraging class warfare.

Actually, the mass media don't seem to mind the class warfare that's continually waged from the top down – undermining the economic security of workers in the name of streamlining production.

"Sacred though jobs allegedly are, the institutions that have been eliminating them by the scores of thousands for their own private profit advantage are never condemned for this in mainstream comment," writes economist Edward S. Herman. "They are even complimented for having taken steps to improve efficiency, productivity and 'competitiveness.'"

Herman is professor emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania's esteemed Wharton School. But he's out of step with the news media because he is much too concerned about the well-being of workers: "The euphemisms, including 'purr' words like restructuring and efficiency, divert attention from the fact that human lives are being shattered."

The news media are absolutely bullish on Wall Street. But workers remain undervalued – and suffer the consequences.

— Norman Solomon

Cleaning Up the Hamptons

Over 100 people gathered April 16 to support the Coalition for Justice, a group formed by Southampton College custodians who were recently "contracted out" to a private company. The coalition is demanding that college administrators cancel the contract and restore custodians as college employees.

The administration hired the Laro Management Company to take over its union contract with the custodians over two months ago. Workers were given one day's notice of the change and forced to sign applications for jobs they already thought they had. A coalition of students, faculty, staff and community members has organized to protest the administration's arrogance and Laro's penchant for union-busting. For the time being, however, custodians wear Laro uniforms and nametags; have lost seniority, tuition remission and other benefits; have been warned not to fraternize with students or other campus employees; and according to George Harney (a janitor at SC for 28 years) feel "like dogs who have been kicked out to the sidewalks."

In typical bureaucratic suitspeak, the college provost claims the decision was "budget neutral" – the school won't save any money; it just wants to get "someone who will drive [the custodians] harder." Aside from the obvious caveat that getting more work for the same money is not budget neutral, the real financial savings will come when the current union contract is up in October 1998. At that point, Laro will either force concessions based on their extremely low profit margin or the company will try to bust the union. If the college decides to cancel the contract at that time they will have no obligation to maintain the union, as custodians will officially be Laro employees. In either case, the college will make money and the custodians will lose out.

The action also has racial overtones.

Twelve of 17 custodians are people of color or recent immigrants – the only predominately minority unit. No other union or worker from the college physical plant staff was "sold" or fired, and while the college says the problem was bad management, the managers have all retained their positions with no reduction in salary or status. In fact, the decision comes in the midst of union pressure to create a promotional pipeline to other levels of employment in the department, which has proved extremely reluctant to hire minorities in the past. Civil rights activist Bob Zellner says the college reminds him of a southern plantation.

The Hamptons are comprised of a dozen or so towns and villages at the eastern end of Long Island and are world-renowned as a vacation place for the rich and famous of New York City. For years the city's paparazzi have escaped the heat and grime of urban summers to relax in their multi-million dollar homes on the ocean beaches of the Island's South Shore. However, as New York City becomes an increasingly difficult place to live year-round (growing poverty, fear of crime, urban blight, etc.) more and more people have made the Hamptons a year-round residence. Helped by the advent of "techno-commuting" innovations, there is a housing boom for a maturing yuppie population that would like to raise their new families in a "cleaner" environment.

The local African-American and Native American populations have generally served in the lower echelons of service sector employment, providing domestic help, public and private maintenance work and "backroom" leisure industry labor as dishwashers, laundries, etc. The growing migrant population of Latino workers has filled in niches as landscape and nursery workers at large estates and local vineyards, as well as the lowest paid service sector employees in retail sales work at depart-

ment and food store chains like K-Mart and King Kullen

The burgeoning need for a low-wage pool of service workers has kept wages from falling too quickly, as the numbers of available workers remains low. Yet management companies like Laro, which can bring in hundreds of unemployed workers (victims of everything from deindustrialization to welfare reform) from up-Island in Western Suffolk and Nassau Counties, promise to change these economic dynamics. The custodians are trying to impress upon the working people of the Hamptons that their local struggle may be a bellwether for future regional fights as the few decent-paying service sector jobs that remain may be in jeopardy if people don't stand up now to the forces of greed and exploitation.

The Coalition for Justice has appeared before the Southampton Anti-Bias Task Force, which has decided to investigate the issue. In the meantime, the coalition contin-

ues a long tradition of grassroots community and workplace activism by applying direct pressure on the administration to address their concerns. It has also become a site where class and racial barriers are talked about openly, not as asides to the main discussions, but as central to the organizing and building of a coalition.

The demonstration on the 16th brought in dozens of new members who are putting together a letter-writing campaign to students' parents and an educational campaign to spread information at all campus events. As one faculty member who spoke at the rally explained, "the college has a mission statement that calls on itself to build a caring and compassionate community." The decision to contract-out the custodians is hardly consistent with that claim.

This struggle will help shape whether Southampton becomes a community where the migrating wealthy do their best to keep servants' wages low, or one where workers have rights, dignity, and access to jobs that pay livable wages with decent benefits.

— Corey Dolgon

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